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A VINDICATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN FORM OF CHURCH-GOVERNMENT,

AS

PROFESSED IN THE STANDARDS

OF THE

Church of Scotland;

In Reply to

THE ANIMADVERSIONS

OF

Messrs. INNES, EWING, BALLENTINE, GLASS, &c. among the Modern, and of GOODWIN, LOCKIER, COTTON, &c. among the Ancient Independents.

In a Series of Letters, addressed to Mr. INNES.

With an APPENDIX, containing Remarks on Mr. HALDANE's View of Social Worship.

By JOHN BROWN,

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL, HADDINGTON.

" Where every thing must undergo discussion," (*i. e.* by the people, as is the case in Independent churches) " some may be in danger of thinking that they have *laws to make*, " instead of *laws to obey*. A few of the most active spirit and readiest elocution will become " the real movers and managers in every business. Those, in short, who have most need of " restraint, are in danger of being led to set it at defiance, while the *peaceful*, and those to " whom *the government is committed nominally*, are terrified and chained down by *the turbulence of the rest*."

Ewing on Acts xv.

" Let it be recollected, it is *systems*, not the character either of individuals or of particular " societies, the merits of which we are here canvassing."

Innes.

" *Ponderibus librata suis.*"

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INTRODUCTION.

THE following Letters were originally intended as a Reply to Mr. Innes only. On farther reflection, however, it appeared to be proper, not to reſtrict theſe inquiries to a review of that writer's ſentiments, but to conſider alſo what had been ſaid by the more ancient and able advocates for Independency. In our reſearches after truth, it ſhould always be our concern to know *what* is ſaid, and not merely *who* ſays it; and certainly Independents cannot object, if, in examining what has been advanced by their preſent champions, we likewiſe conſider the more learned and ingenious arguments of their enlightened predeceſſors.

It is requeſted to be remarked, that it is *the principles* only, and not *the practices* of Preſbyterians that are here defended. The advocate for Preſbytery is certainly no more bound to vindicate the latter, in order to eſtabliſh the former, than the advocate for Chriſtianity is bound to prove that the conduct of Chriſtians is blameleſs and praiſe-worthy, in order to ſhew that Chriſtianity is divine. It is Preſbytery alone as exhibited in the ſcriptures for

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which we here contend, and it is on this ground alone that we can impartially review and compare it with Independency.

Let it be further conſidered, that if the errors which appear in the conduct of Preſbyterians, with regard to government, are better known than thoſe of Independents, it is owing, in a great meaſure, to the ſuperior publicity of their courts. While none but members are allowed to attend the meetings of the latter, and while the ſtricteſt ſecrecy marks their proceedings in general, none are commonly prohibited from hearing the deliberations of the former. If the miſtakes of Preſbyterians then are more generally known than thoſe of Independents, it ariſes from a circumſtance which has ever been admitted to be a very important excellence in civil courts; namely, that their proceedings are uſually conducted in the preſence and hearing of all, even though not connected with their ſocieties, while the tranſactions of Independents are carried on in private, and are carefully concealed from the inſpection of the world.

That inſtances of very lawleſs oppreſſion have occurred among our Tabernacle Independents in Scotland, even during the ſhort time that they have already exiſted, is attempted to be proved, Letter II. Theſe inſtances are taken either from the writings of thoſe who repreſent themſelves as aggrieved, and whoſe ſtatement has never been refuted by their opponents, or from the writings of thoſe who were guilty of the oppreſſion, and have acknowledged their fault. And, perhaps, had their courts been as open to the public as

thoſe of Preſbyterians, we ſhould have heard of a ſtill greater number of acts of tyranny and injuſtice.

To allow the office-bearers to decide on any point, when the members of their congregations have not been previouſly conſulted, has always been affirmed by former Independents to be a diſplay of eccleſiaſtical deſpotiſm in Preſbyterians. In the Letter however to which we have referred, it is endeavoured to be proved, that, in *many* inſtances, Mr. Ewing contends for this very power; and conſequently, at leaſt on their acknowledged principles, the conſtitution of his church, to a certain extent, muſt be viewed as *a ſpiritual deſpotiſm.*

It is attempted, moreover, to be demonſtrated in theſe Letters, that the ſcheme of theſe writers, by rendering every congregation in the church of Chriſt independent of the reſt, exhibits ſuch a view of his kingdom as would be preſented of the civil and political world, were it broken into as many independent governments as there were towns or villages on the face of the earth, and their governors were obliged uniformly to conſult the inhabitants before they could perform any act of authority.

That the author, in every inſtance, ſhould accurately have ſtated the ſentiments of Independents, is what he by no means pretends. As each of their congregations is independent of the reſt, it is poſſible that there may be as many creeds and conſtitutions among them as there are churches on the earth. But to think of repreſenting accurately the

ſentiments of all of them, amidſt this *poſſible* variety, would certainly be a vain and ridiculous idea, eſpecially as moſt of them account it a ſin to write and publiſh theſe creeds to the world. He is conſcious however that he has not wilfully, in any inſtance, miſtated their views; and if thoſe, whoſe opinions are here examined, can point out any caſe in which he has not fairly exhibited them, he will moſt readily correct it.

Let it not be ſaid, that the reaſonings in theſe Letters cannot be admitted to be concluſive, becauſe many Independents do not, as is here aſſerted, allow their members a right to vote upon every queſtion. It is of little importance to differ about words. All Independents (Mr. Ewing excepted) aſk the judgment and conſent of their members upon *every* matter, before the office-bearers can pronounce a deciſion; and if ſo, the arguments which are here adduced, are equally concluſive as upon the former ſuppoſition.

Let it be underſtood farther, that the arguments advanced will not be conſidered as overturned though a number of miſtakes ſhould be pointed out in ſeparate and detached obſervations, unleſs the body of the evidence be fairly met, and fully overthrown. It will much leſs be conſidered as at all affected if encountered only by wit and humour, a weapon of which ſome advocates for Independency ſeem to be peculiarly fond. It is from conviction alone that the author of theſe Letters has publiſhed his ſentiments, and when an oppoſite conviction is produced, by diſpaſſionate, and able, and ſcriptural reaſoning, he will inſtantly renounce them. He

has no wiſh that Preſbytery ſhould be retained any farther than it can be ſupported by ſcripture, and the moment that it is proved that it cannot ſo be ſupported, he will be happy to ſee that it is rejected by the world.

It is of little importance for the public to know, that theſe Letters were written amidſt many avocations, and at conſiderable intervals. It is mentioned only as an apology for any inaccuracies of ſtyle, or repetitions of ſentiment, which may occur in the peruſal of them. This, however, is the only indulgence for which he pleads. He aſks none in behalf of the argument. He wiſhes it fully and impartially to be examined, and will endeavour candidly to conſider the objections which are offered to his reaſonings, if ſtated in the ſpirit of Chriſtian meekneſs, and not with that virulence which ſhews only how ſtrongly an individual ſmarts under a ſenſe of inconſiſtency, or how keenly he is devoted to the purpoſes of a party.

The author originally intended to examine likewiſe the argument for Separation from the Church of Scotland, drawn from what have been called its corruptions: but of this, his preſent avocations will not admit. He ſhall probably however be induced to complete his deſign, as ſoon as he can command the leiſure and time which it muſt neceſſarily require. And, till ſome fuller treatiſe be publiſhed, he begs leave to recommend to the peruſal of his readers, Ferguſon (of Kilwinning) on Independency and Schiſm; and a valuable pamphlet by a late eminent Miniſter, entitled, Thoughts on Modern Diviſions.

The publication of theſe ſheets has been delayed for ſome time, that the Second Appendix, containing a Review of Mr. Haldane's book on Social Worſhip, as far as relates to the ſubject of Government, might accompany the Letters.

ERRATA.

Except in p. 53. and Letter IX. Dr. *Watt*, not Dr. *Iſaac Watts*, was intended to be quoted.

P. 236. l. 25. for *members*, read *the members*.

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LETTERS

TO

MR. INNES.

LETTER I.

SIR,

IT is with the utmoſt reluctance that I addreſs you on the ſubject of your late publication. Senſible of the evils which have often reſulted to the cauſe of Chriſt from religious controverſies, and from controverſies eſpecially of inferior importance, I am ſorry that an opportunity ſhould again be afforded to the enemies of religion to triumph at the increaſing animoſities and diſſenſions of her friends. Conſcious alſo of the neceſſity of mutual forbearance, to promote among Chriſtians that univerſal charity which is "the bond of perfectneſs," I cannot behold without the deepeſt regret, charges the moſt awful and momentous, exhibited by one body of Chriſtians againſt another, though equally attached to the ſame bleſſed cauſe; charges which, from their peculiar character, are not leſs deſtructive of thoſe pleaſures and advantages which flow from the cultivation of private intercourſe, than totally incompatible with public fellowſhip.

Extraordinary as was the manner in which you were led to change your views of the Eſtabliſhment *, and

* See Letter III. p. 27. in which you admit that it was in conſequence of an inquiry begun upon your being offered another ſituation in your preſent connection, that you finally determined

ſtrong as may have been your convictions of the propriety of that meaſure, it appeared to me particularly unbecoming in *you*, or any of *your* brethren, to diſcover ſuch keenneſs in your oppoſition to that Eſtabliſhment as you have lately manifeſted. It was the avowed deſign of a celebrated ſociety *, of which many of you are members, and which may juſtly be conſidered as the parent of your churches, to diſſeminate the goſpel where the means of inſtruction were not enjoyed, or, in your apprehenſion, not enjoyed in purity, and not to form a party for *Independents*, by dividing the congregations of faithful miniſters, either among the Diſſenters or in the Eſtabliſhment †. You ought certainly to have conſidered alſo,

to leave the Church of Scotland. Whether ſuch alſo was the ſecurity of your brother Mr. Ballentine, before he renounced his Preſbyterian connection, I do not pretend to ſay. I conſider it however as ſurpriſing, that *for many years* before he had renounced his profeſſion as a Preſbyterian, or even his ſtudies, in the view of becoming a Preſbyterian miniſter, he ſhould tell us, that "he had clearly ſeen from the word of God, that churches of "Chriſt ſhould conſiſt only of *converted perſons*, and that their "government ſhould be what is called *congregational*," or Independent, and yet have remained a Preſbyterian. See p. 19. of his Obſervations.

* That for propagating the goſpel at home.

† That ſuch was the original profeſſion of this ſociety, is evident from the regulations which they delivered to their itinerant preachers and catechiſts, and which, ſo far as I know, they have never yet publicly retracted. In the 2d and 3d of theſe, it is declared, that "theſe itinerants are not to ſhew a preference "to *any* denomination of Chriſtians, either *eſtabliſhed* or *diſſent-*"*ing*, but exhort the people to attend *wherever the goſpel is* "*preached in purity*. And to endeavour to *ſtrengthen* the hands "of *all* faithful miniſters of Jeſus Chriſt, of *whatever* denomina-"tion." See Appendix to Haldane's Addreſs. If ſuch liberal ſentiments however were *the genuine ſentiments* of this ſociety, and have uniformly been adhered to by its itinerants and catechiſts, how can it be explained, that in every inſtance where they ſucceeded in procuring a congregation, that congregation has *invariably*

that the more formidable the charges which you bring forward againſt it are, the more ſtriking is your own inconſiſtency, in granting the higheſt and moſt valued privileges of your church to perſons while remaining in this very ſociety, if you were ſatisfied as to the rectitude of their principles and practice *.

become an Independent church? And eſpecially, ſince you, and Meſſrs. Haldane and Ewing, are ſo zealous members and patrons of this ſociety, I ſhould be glad to know upon what principle you can vindicate your preſent conduct, in writing with ſuch vehemence againſt faithful miniſters both *eſtabliſhed* and diſſenting, while, as connected with this ſociety, you are *ſtill* ſolemnly declared to be publicly aſſociated, "to *ſtrengthen* their hands, and encourage "their people *to wait upon their labours*, and to enjoin all to ſhew "*no greater partiality* for *yourſelves* than for *them!!*"

* Reprehenſible as is the practice of *mixed communion*, as granted occaſionally to the members of other religious ſocieties by ſome of our Diſſenters, it ſeems to be doubly ſo upon the principles of *your* churches. You conſider the Church of Scotland in particular, as will inſtantly be proved, as an image of Antichriſt, if not Antichriſt itſelf. But what pleaſure can you experience, when you ſit down to participate of your feaſt of love with men whom you regard as ſupporters of this adverſary of the bleſſed Saviour? or what ſatisfaction can they feel, when they reflect that they are joining in this delightful exerciſe with perſons who, whatever attachment they profeſs, aſcribe to them, in another view, this dreadful character? If I am not miſinformed too, it has not been uncommon among you to admit thoſe to occaſional communion, whom afterwards, when they applied for ſtated membership with the very ſame views, you would not receive. But where, Sir, is your warrant either from ſcripture or reaſon, for denying the latter, which does not introduce to ordinances more ſolemn, or privileges more important, to perſons to whom you would not ſcruple to grant the former? Yet while you have imparted at firſt this privilege with the utmoſt cheerfulneſs to thoſe pious perſons who occaſionally applied for it, you have been known in many inſtances, if they perſiſted in their applications, to remonſtrate with them on what you denominated *the inconſiſtency* of their conduct, and moſt aſſiduouſly to inſiſt that they would become *ſtated* members. Does an act however, which, in your opinion,

It is undeniable however, that such charges have been advanced by you against it. You yourself insinuate (p. 116.), in terms the most decided, that it is no longer entitled to the character of *a church of Christ*. And your brother Mr. Ewing, in a late very extraordinary paper respecting Vows (see Missionary Magazine for January 1804, p. 6.), after quoting Rev. xiii. 16, 17. "And he caused all, both small and great, rich and "poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right "hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might "buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name "of the beast, or the number of his name"—introduces, in page 36. a note from the annotations of the Geneva translators, explanatory of the mark of the beast; and then subjoins, "How happy should we be that we are "happily delivered from so many of the abuses mention-"ed above; and that, through the lenity of the govern-"ment under which we live, any man is at liberty to "reject them all! No class of men ought to be more "sensible of the value of our civil constitution than

may be performed without inconsistency for *eight* or *ten* times, become inconsistent if more *frequently repeated?* And does not the solicitude which you discover, and the importunity which you employ, to prevail with those who are occasional communicants to become stated members, disclose a design rather of converting this solemn and invaluable privilege into a mean of *increasing your own societies*, than of promoting the *mutual love* of Christians? And, in short, according to the principles of your different societies, every individual, who is admitted as a member, is entitled as a virtual, though not a nominal ruler, to judge and vote in the affairs of the church. If then, according to your uniform practice, you allow a member of the Church of England, or a member from our Establishment or the Presbyterian Dissenters, when you are satisfied at once with his faith and piety, to eat with you occasionally the sacrament of the supper, upon what grounds, I demand, could you refuse this person, even while he remained an *Episcopalian*, or *Presbyterian*, a right also to *administer occasionally* in your *Independent* congregations as an ecclesiastical ruler?

" Chriſtians, who cannot in conſcience hold communion " with *a national* church. In theſe times, and in *this* " *country*, we may refuſe to be ſealed with *Antichriſt's* " mark, and be nevertheleſs ſuffered to live among men." Here it is plain, that he conſiders even the ſtrongeſt of theſe names, which have hitherto been viewed as appropriated to that church which is called in ſcripture, " The mother of harlots, and abominations of the " earth," as applicable alſo to our national church. She too, it ſeems, in his opinion, is *the beaſt* mentioned in this paſſage; and conſequently, according to the deſcription of *this* Antichriſt, muſt ſit *in the place of God*, and *exalt herſelf above all which is called God:* and of her alſo it may be affirmed (however contradictory to fact), that ſhe has made *all nations* to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornications, and has deceived them who dwell upon the earth *by the lying miracles* which ſhe has pretended to perform!!! How ſtrange indeed, that perſons who are ſuch ſticklers for purity of communion, ſhould receive to occaſional fellowſhip the *followers* of this *beaſt*, and ſupporters of this Antichriſt—the members, in ſhort, of this church, which *cannot* be conſidered as a church of Chriſt! How ſtill more aſtoniſhing is it, that men, who glory ſo much in their candour and charity, ſhould apply to our Eſtabliſhment the titles of a church, not one of the awful characteriſtics of which, whether as already ſtated, or more fully deſcribed in the ſacred volume, either can be aſcribed to her in themſelves, or were ever hitherto aſcribed to her in the ſame extent, even by her moſt inveterate enemies *. See an admirable refutation

* I muſt here except Dr. C. Stuart, who, after leaving the Eſtabliſhment, in 1777 publiſhed a moſt violent invective againſt it, in the form of a ſermon. In it he attempts to trace a reſemblance between our church and Antichriſt, which is repreſented in the Revelation, as a woman ſitting upon a ſcarlet-coloured beaſt, with ſeven heads and ten horns. It is remarkable

of this paper on Vows, and a detection of ſome radical and important errors on which the ſcheme of theſe gen-

however, that while he ſelects certain circumſtances in which he imagines there is a ſimilarity, he omits others far more important and diſtinctive, in which even his ingenuity could not diſcover the ſlighteſt degree of coincidence. It is evident alſo, that to point out a reſemblance in a few particulars, admitting that he has ſucceeded, will not warrant the application of this name to the Eſtabliſhment. Some things which are very good, reſemble others which are bad, in a number of circumſtances; and yet it cannot be inferred from this, that they are evil. A good man may reſemble a bad man, in being ſupported by the power and wealth of others, as he here ſays that the Church of Scotland reſembles Antichriſt; and yet we cannot infer from this, that he is an unworthy character. Nay, we are told in this ſame book, chap. xxi. 24. that when the pureſt ſtate of the church on earth ſhall come, "the kings of the earth," who are ſaid, in the deſcription of Antichriſt which he quotes, to give its power and ſtrength to the beaſt, "ſhall bring their glory and honour into the "church." But ſince the Doctor conſiders it as one part of the ſimilarity of our church to Antichriſt, that her miniſters, while as reſponſible for their doctrine and practice as thoſe of any Diſſenters, are ſecured, as long as they diſcharge their duty, in their maintenance by Government, what will he ſay of the millennial church, into which the kings of the earth are to bring their glory and honour, to ſupport and promote it? Since he repreſents it likewiſe as an evidence of our ſimilarity to the mother of harlots, that we have *a written confeſſion*, exhibiting our view of the meaning of the ſcriptures, and that our creed will not agree with his view of theſe ſcriptures, does it not follow from this, that as there is not at preſent a church in Scotland with which he can join in communion, every Baptiſt, and Independent, and Preſbyterian diſſenting, as well as *eſtabliſhed* congregation, muſt ſo far be viewed by him as a member of Antichriſt? In fine, as he mentions it as another point of reſemblance, that the two witneſſes of God propheſy in her clothed in ſackcloth, it appears neceſſarily to reſult from it, that as we are informed in Rev. xi. 3. that theſe witneſſes were to propheſy for 1260 prophetic days, or according to him for that number of years, the Church of Scotland, if we attend to the firſt period of its exiſtence as a

tlemen in a great meaſure is founded, in the Miſſionary Magazine for March 1804 *.

You have, however, produced evidence which appears to *you* at leaſt, demonſtrative of the truth of your charges, and which conſequently juſtifies your ſeparation from the eſtabliſhed church. Of this evidence you invite a fair diſcuſſion. It will not therefore, I preſume, be diſagreeable to you to attend to ſome reflections which, on a peruſal of your Letters, occurred to a member of the Eſtabliſhment, and which, on review, ſtill diſpoſe him to object to the cogency of your reaſoning, for the neceſſity or propriety of the ſtep which you have taken. The arguments which you adduce to eſtabliſh your poſition are of two kinds; thoſe which, in your opinion, prove *the conſtitution* of the Church of Scotland to be antiſcriptural, and thoſe which relate to the improprieties exhibited in *its adminiſtration*. In the following pages it is propoſed to conſider theſe arguments in their order, with the degree of force which they appear to poſſeſs.

Conſcious of the fallacy of the common practice of arguing againſt a ſcheme from the *abuſe* which may have been made of it, or the errors and inconſiſtencies which may have appeared in the conduct of thoſe who have held it, you juſtly expreſs, in language the moſt pointed, your diſapprobation of ſuch reaſoning. "It is not,"

diſtinct ſociety, muſt, in the Doctor's view, have ſtill a proſpect of exiſtence for an extent of time, not very encouraging to him and his Independent brethren in their attempts to overthrow it.

* It may moreover be remarked, that ſince it is ſpecified in this paſſage as a ſign of Antichriſt, even according to Mr. Ewing, that ſhe allows none to live among men who do not receive her mark or number, it is impoſſible for him, without directly *oppoſing his own expreſſions*, as well as the explicit teſtimony of the ſacred oracles, to apply this opprobrious appellation to our church, which permits Independents to live unmoleſted in their religious privileges.

you ſay (p. 9.), " the character of individuals, but " the general aſpect and tendency of any particular " ſyſtem, by which our opinion of it ought to be regu- " lated. If it be founded on ſcriptural principles, " *ungodly men* being *profeſſedly* attached to it will not " make it worſe; and if not, the moſt eminent examples " of holineſs among its votaries will not be able to ſanc- " tion it." And again, in p. 105. " Let it be recol- " lected, it is *ſyſtems*, not the characters either of indi- " viduals or of particular ſocieties, the merits of which " we are here canvaſſing. Theſe are only implicated ſo " far as they are found countenancing a ſyſtem, of which " there is ſatisfactory evidence that it is not agreeable " to the word of God." Than this, indeed, nothing can be more rational; for were we to reject a principle or ſyſtem on account of the errors, and even immoralities, of many who hold it, we ſhould not only ſet aſide Preſbytery, but Independency and Chriſtianity, and even reaſon itſelf. You rightly therefore begin with the conſtitution of our church, and on this ground we are willing moſt readily to meet you, aſſured that if it can be proved to be agreeable to ſcripture, it will be difficult for you to eſtabliſh the propriety of ſeparating from its communion.

In reviewing then your remarks upon *the conſtitution* of the Church of Scotland, I am happy to obſerve that you are pleaſed to object only to its form of government, conſcious, I preſume, that the views which it profeſſes of evangelical truth, in its Confeſſion and Catechiſms, are no leſs conſiſtent than your own with the word of God. Its adminiſtration by Preſbytery alone is the object of your cenſure, and againſt this you declaim as one abundant ſource of the evils which are to be found in it. With this momentous conſequence however, even though theſe evils ſhould exiſt, I hope it will afterwards appear that Preſbytery is not chargeable; and that of all thoſe forms of government which we know, Preſbytery is the beſt

fitted to preſerve purity of doctrine and diſcipline. At preſent it is ſufficient to mention, that corruptions, not only in government but in ſentiment, are not peculiar to Preſbytery, but are to be found in an equal, if not in a greater degree among Independents themſelves. No where have the opinions of Socinians, and Arians, and Arminians, and Univerſaliſts, more generally prevailed than among the Independents in England *. As no argument then, founded upon the exiſtence of ſuch evils among Independents, would be admitted by you to be concluſive againſt Independency, unleſs it could be proved that it was favourable *to the introduction* of them; ſo no argument, I contend, can be adduced from ſuch evils, if they exiſt in the Eſtabliſhment, againſt its Preſbyterian government, unleſs it can be evinced that that mode of government is the ſource and cauſe of the *introduction* of ſuch errors. But this you have never even attempted to demonſtrate.

I am ſurpriſed, beſides, that in your examination of Preſbytery, you did not conſider its various parts ſeparately, as detailed in our ſtandards, with the particular evidence which is exhibited for each. The great body of that evidence you have very ſlightly noticed, and part of it you have not even noticed at all. This, however, would undoubtedly have been the moſt ſatisfactory method of refuting the errors, if errors they are, which are maintained on this ſubject by our national church, and it would certainly have impreſſed your readers with a more favourable idea of your fidelity and candour. It would alſo, perhaps, by no means have been prejudicial

* That many, alſo, of the Preſbyterians in England have embraced theſe errors cannot be denied. It is well known however, that theſe Preſbyterians have no courts of review, or do not regard them; and that, while they profeſs to be Preſbyterians, from their total inattention to the peculiarities of that ſyſtem, they are more worthy, in a certain view, of the name of Independents.

to you in this important particular, if, after ſtating your arguments in favour of Independency, you had been pleaſed likewiſe to mention what had been ſaid in anſwer to them a hundred times by former Preſbyterians. But this you have thought proper completely to ſuppreſs; and inſtead of putting your readers, agreeably to your promiſe (p. 3.), in poſſeſſion of the arguments on both ſides of the queſtion, while you have illuſtrated, at leaſt as fully as you knew them, the arguments of Independents, have totally concealed the replies of their opponents.

You have thought proper to conſider *at once*, and in a very few pages, the *different* peculiarities of the Preſbyterian ſyſtem; and ſome parts of that ſyſtem you have not even mentioned. As this plan, however, neither appears to be a faithful exhibition of truth, nor fitted for clear and accurate diſcuſſion, it is propoſed in what follows, to conſider

In the 1ſt place, The opinions of Preſbyterians and Independents with regard to the nature and extent of that power which ſhould be granted to church-rulers.

2dly, To whom this power is given by the ſcriptures in a particular congregation; whether to the members of the church at large—to the paſtor alone—or to the paſtor and lay-elders united.

And in the 3d place, If every particular congregation is ſo to be governed, whether its paſtor and elders are, by ſcripture-authority, required to ſubmit to the review and controul of the paſtors and elders of ſeveral congregations, united in a Preſbytery, Synod, or Aſſembly.

LETTER II.

SIR,

THE *firſt* point, I apprehend, in which you differ from Preſbyterians, is *the nature* of that power which they grant to their rulers; and here, in words at leaſt, the difference is important. Upon this topic Independents have often declaimed with the utmoſt keenneſs, and from this ſource they have derived their warmeſt invectives againſt the Eſtabliſhment. Upon this topic, too, you conſiderably enlarge, and attempt to paint, in very ſhocking colours, the baneful conſequences with which the authority of Preſbytery is neceſſarily attended.

Before however I attend to your arguments, I would briefly advert to a miſrepreſentation which has frequently been made by Independents, of the claims of Preſbyterians with regard to the *nature and kind* of their authority. Often has it been ſaid, that the power for which they contend, amounts to nothing leſs than a *legiſlative* authority, and inveſts them with a right to enact at pleaſure whatever laws they wiſh to eſtabliſh in the church of Chriſt *. Than this, however, nothing undoubtedly can be more remote from their ſentiments. They, as well as Independents, profeſs to admit that Jeſus is the only Head of his church; that thoſe laws alone which *he* has revealed, bind the conſciences and conduct of his ſubjects †;

* See Watt's Plain Proof, p. 175. near the middle, where he affirms that a *legiſlative* power is aſſumed by Preſbyterians.

† In proof of this, we may refer to the words of our Confeſſion, chap. xxxi. ſect. iii. where it is expreſsly declared, "that it "belongeth to Synods and Councils *miniſterially*," *i. e.* merely as the ſervants of Jeſus, and accountable to him, "to determine "controverſies of faith and caſes of conſcience"—to the words of that very Aſſembly which framed this Confeſſion, and collected from the ſcriptures our form of church-government; "We ſay "again, that this power of miniſters is no where any other than "*miniſterial*, and that it is not to be exerciſed any where at their

and that the higheſt honour to which eccleſiaſtical *rulers* can now aſpire, is to explain what the doctrine of the church is, with regard to the true meaning of the laws of Chriſt, and authoritatively to enforce among thoſe of her communion the execution of *his* laws. In matters indeed of *inferior* moment, which regard ſimply the convenience, or external order and regularity of the church, and for which no explicit directions are given in the ſcriptures, Preſbyterians allow that Chriſt has intruſted

" *own wills*, but according *to his direction*," (p. 9. of their Anſwers to the Seven Independents)—to the words of the London miniſters, who, while they contend moſt ſtrenuouſly for the divine right of Preſbytery, declare explicitly, p. 45. that the power which is to be committed to its rulers is to be " only ſubordinate and mini-" ſterial"—and to the treatiſes of Gilleſpie, in his Aaron's Rod Bloſſoming, p. 175.; of Wood againſt Lockier, p. 276. &c.; and of Hall on Church-government, p. 59.; with many other Preſbyterians, who, though they aſſert moſt decidedly the right of the rulers to eccleſiaſtical power, very pointedly ſtate that it is not to be legiſlative. Above all, we may refer to that very ſtriking fact in favour of Preſbytery, that many of the moſt zealous of our ancient Preſbyterians, in the laſt awful perſecutions which were witneſſed in theſe lands, bled and died in ſupport of this truth, that *Chriſt alone* is inveſted with a *legiſlative* power in his church. How ſtrange then, whatever may be *the practices* of Preſbyterians, that Independents ſhould deny this to be at leaſt a part of *their principles*, as much as of their own, that the power of church-officers is only to be ſubordinate, not legiſlative! And how extraordinary, that the writer before quoted, when ſpeaking ſolely of the Preſbyterian *ſyſtem*, ſhould boldly affirm, in the face of ſuch teſtimonies, that it authorizes its church-officers to *make*, as well as *interpret* and execute its laws! If ſuch be the view of *the principles* of Preſbyterians which is ſo obnoxious to Independents, it is no leſs rejected, in profeſſion and ſyſtem, by Preſbyterians than by them. And, at the ſame time, it is a view of *the principles* of Preſbytery which I feel obliged to declare that I have never found in the writings of Preſbyterians, and have met with only amidſt the ſelf-created theories and accuſations of Independents.

a power with thoſe who rule in his church, to appoint ſuch regulations as may be requiſite for the general ends of edification and utility. But this is no more than Independents themſelves have uniformly claimed *; while it is an inconteſtable fact, that, in every inſtance in which *legiſlative* power is diſclaimed by Independents, it is *univerſally* and *explicitly* diſclaimed by Preſbyterians.

But admitting that the power with which rulers are inveſted is not legiſlative, but ſimply of the kind which has been now ſtated, what is the *degree* of it which they are warranted to exerciſe? Are they entitled, as Independents affirm, merely to deliver their deciſions to thoſe whom they govern, as *matters of opinion?* or have they a right to announce them, as Preſbyterians maintain, as *authoritative determinations*, and require their cheerful and univerſal obedience? In the former of theſe ſchemes you profeſs your belief, and reprobate the latter, as ſubſervient merely to promote the purpoſes of tyranny and oppreſſion. That inſtances of tyranny may indeed be found in the conduct of Preſbyterians, I readily grant; but that ſuch inſtances are authorized by their ſyſtem, I poſitively deny. Nothing can be more contrary to the *genius* at leaſt of this form of government; while it is a notorious fact, that it is not only not excluded by Independency itſelf, but ſeems not even to be *equally* precluded by this plan of adminiſtration. Many inſtances might be adduced, of moſt imperious deciſions by Independent rulers; deciſions, too, which, when once paſſed, were for ever final; and deciſions pronounced by the very men who, while they exclaim againſt Preſbyterians for exerciſing even inferior authoritative power, profeſs to claim no more than a right to deliver their *opinion* and *advice* to thoſe whom they go-

* Thus the tabernacle-churches in Scotland require their members to ſtand in ſinging.

vern. Even in one of your ſiſter-churches, an inſtance of this kind the moſt aſtoniſhing and unaccountable, if we are to believe the narrative of thoſe who were aggrieved, has already occurred; and their narrative has never yet been invalidated. In this caſe, ſurely, it was more than an *advice* or *opinion* which was delivered: for when certain members refuſed to concur with the paſtor in a moſt inſignificant matter, ſo far at leaſt as it related to him, a deciſion of cenſure was paſſed, not only in a tone as authoritative as is ever aſſumed by any Preſbytery, but in a manner as ſummary and rigorous as that of any Roman Conclave *. In Independency, moreover, which,

* See a narrative publiſhed by ſeven members of your church at Perth, who were excommunicated by Mr. Little, for refuſing to concur with the reſt of the members in adopting the verſion of the Pſalms of David compoſed by Dr. Watts. The account which is here given of the conduct of that gentleman, conſidering him as an Independent, is indeed aſtoniſhing, and though attempted to be ſet aſide by him in the reply which he has publiſhed, ſeems yet to be unanſwered. He contents himſelf, *in general* (p. 7.), with "denying the view which they give of his words "and actions, in relation to their ſeparation." And though they have produced charges againſt him the moſt *preciſe* and *ſpecific*, and eſtabliſhed them by facts the moſt pointed and particular, he ſatisfies himſelf, and imagines that he will ſatisfy the world, by *ſimply ſaying*, "that theirs is a moſt diſtorted and unjuſt repreſentation, "deſigned to bring the whole tabernacle-diſcipline to contempt." It muſt be obvious however, that ſuch *vague* affirmations, unſubſtantiated by proof, cannot be ſuſtained as a ſatisfactory anſwer to accuſations ſo ſerious, and attempted at leaſt to be ſupported by references to facts and incidents the moſt *preciſe* and *determinate*. His reaſons, moreover, for declining "to enter into "particulars, and for long ſilence" after the publication of their narrative (compare p. 12. with p. 6. 7.), muſt ſtrike every candid and impartial mind as very *extraordinary*, when urged by a man as an excuſe for not vindicating himſelf from accuſations certainly the moſt *particular* and *important*. He tells us, that "it can anſwer "no other poſſible end than to harden the minds, and to increaſe "the prejudices, of the public againſt the truth—that if he were

in its number of rulers, reſembles and equals the loweſt form of *political democracy*, there is certainly more room, *as in other democracies*, for the diſplay of tyranny than in a mixed and moderated government, ſuch as that

" to follow them over the ground they have trodden, it would be " to fall into the ſame evil he condemns—and beſides, however " it may be with others, he feels it impoſſible to *repeat* and *refute* " their ſlanders without being in a meaſure contaminated with " their ſpirit; and rather than this, he would endure their utmoſt " reproach.—That, from careful examination of his mind, in " ſhort, he is perſuaded that it would be more injurious to his " character as a Chriſtian miniſter, to enter into ſuch a conteſt, " than all their invectives can prove—and that theſe are the rea- " ſons why, in *the kind* of defence which he is pleaſed to publiſh, " he addreſſes himſelf *only to thoſe* who are under his *paſtoral care.*" But, certainly, if this reaſoning were concluſive, it would follow that whenever the conduct of a Chriſtian, or of a miniſter was attacked, if the charges appeared to him unjuſt and exaggerated, he ought by no means to endeavour to refute and remove them. It is merely his duty to aſſert the contrary, and content himſelf with ſuppoſing that this *aſſertion*, though unſupported by proof, will be completely ſatisfactory to the world at large, who know no more of him than of thoſe who are his accuſers. Nay, it is a neceſſary conſequence from his mode of arguing, that it is impoſſible for a Chriſtian when aſſailed by ſlanders, to reply to it with *meekneſs*; and, like his bleſſed Lord when reviled by his enemies, while he vindicates himſelf from their revilings, not to *revile them again*. But is not this contrary at once to the commandments of ſcripture, and the example of Jeſus, who repeatedly repelled the ſlanders of his foes? Is it not at variance, alſo, with the conduct of Paul, who, in his different Epiſtles, frequently defends himſelf from the imputations which were caſt upon himſelf and his miniſtry by the Judaizing teachers? And does it not imply a cenſure of your brother Mr. Ewing, who repeatedly attempted, though not with *ſuperabundant meekneſs*, to reply to Mr. Robertſon, reſpecting the intereſting charges which he advances againſt him; as well as to your friend Mr. Haldane, who thought proper to follow a ſimilar courſe, when animadverſions were made upon his opinions and plan by a great literary character? In ſhort, as the honour and intereſts of religion muſt undoubtedly be affected in a very eminent

of Preſbytery. In the latter, the adminiſtration is veſted in a few, compoſed of miniſters and lay-elders; the laſt of whom ought, at leaſt by the conſtitution of the church, to be choſen from the wiſeſt and moſt pious

degree by the accuſations which are here advanced againſt Mr. Little, if not individually refuted, and as it is impoſſible for him, as in the caſe of *a mere general* allegation, to vindicate himſelf from theſe *particular* charges by his future conduct, he appears to be bound, by every conſideration, to anſwer preciſely the accuſations here exhibited, and thus to wipe away from himſelf and his congregation the odium which appears to be thrown upon them.

If Mr. Little, beſides, as he here tells us, intends only to addreſs himſelf to thoſe who are under his paſtoral care, and to vindicate himſelf and his conduct *ſolely to them*, why has he publiſhed this addreſs to *the world?* Is the world to believe them any more than their paſtor, becauſe, as he was for a long time, they have yet been ſilent. Did not they too, by confirming the ſentence of excommunication, make themſelves a party with him? and would it be fair to give credit to their *vague* aſſertions againſt another party, any more than his, if they do not anſwer the proofs by which their opponents ſupport their charges?

In fine, admitting even that the cauſe for which theſe perſons were excommunicated was *juſt* and *valid*, one thing ſeems to be plain, that though the church afterwards ſanctioned this deed, Mr. Little himſelf, after public worſhip, without convening the members and obtaining their conſent, ventured to pronounce upon theſe individuals this awful ſentence. Nay, when the church aſſembled to decide upon the ſtep which he had taken, he would not allow the men, whom he alone as yet could be conſidered as having excommunicated, to ſpeak in their own defence before they were excommunicated by the church alſo. And afterwards, when two of the members who were expelled, waited upon him for a copy of the ſentence of excommunication, he told them that he had burnt it, and would not write another; and that if they wanted ſuch a paper, they might recover it from the flames. And, as if theſe inſults had not ſufficed, when they requeſted him to produce a letter which they had written to Mr. Haldane, narrating their grievances, and which had been tranſmitted by him to Mr. Little, and when they aſked him expreſsly to point out

among the people, and ſhould be known to be zealouſly attached to their intereſts. Among Independents however, repreſentatives are excluded (a thing which is admitted in the loweſt *republican* forms of government),

any paſſages of it in which they had miſſtated the truth, he poſitively refuſed. Is ſuch conduct, however, conſiſtent with the principles of modern Independents, who boaſt ſo much of the *liberty* and *equity* which are diſcovered in their courts, and exclaim with ſuch keenneſs againſt the tyranny of our Eſtabliſhment? Can their paſtor, without requeſting a meeting of the church, and obtaining their conſent, excommunicate any of their members? Are the perſons who are accuſed of any crimes or errors, which *even merit excommunication*, denied in their churches, before ſentence is pronounced, the privilege *of ſpeaking* in their own *vindication?* Does it reſemble the conduct of a man who was conſcious that he had acted conſiſtently with juſtice or candour, immediately to burn the paper which he had read in impeachment of the character of any of his members, and inflicting upon them one of the moſt awful of puniſhments? Was it worthy of ſuch a conſciouſneſs of rectitude and moderation, to refuſe to furniſh them with another copy of the deed, and to bid them, if they choſe, recal it from the flames? Could conduct ſo tyrannical and imperious as this, however merited the ſentence, be tolerated in any civil courts in Europe, except thoſe of the military deſpot of France? Did it intimate that he was able ſatisfactorily to overturn the repreſentation which they had given in their letter to Mr. Haldane, when he refuſed to read it, and point out any inſtance in which their ſtatement was incorrect? Are accuſations like theſe, which ſo deeply concern *the honour of religion*, and *the reſpectability of his church*, to be ſet aſide by ſimply telling us, that he would prejudice the wicked againſt the truth, and would imbibe the ſpirit with which ſlanders are uttered, were he to reply particularly to theſe allegations? Such an apology may, perhaps, appear ſufficient to Mr. Little and his Independent friends, but it will not ſatisfy the world at large, judging by the principles of equity and integrity. And till theſe charges are individually, not merely *denied*, but *refuted*, *the credit of religion*, ſo far as connected with *the honour of Independents* who aſſociate with him, and *the diſcipline of the church* which retains him as its paſtor, muſt be conſidered as deeply and materially affected.

and a plan of eccleſiaſtical adminiſtration is followed, which, in its form at leaſt, is much more lawleſs, and more fitted to be productive either of tyranny or of anarchy; as it conſtitutes every member of the church, man,

Nor is the caſe of Mr. Little the only inſtance of oppreſſive government which occurs among Independents. Even in a tabernacle-church which was formed lately at Elgin, under the miniſtry of Mr. Ballentine, and the greater part of which ſeparated from him, ſomething very ſimilar to ſpiritual domination appears to have been practiſed. Their paſtor, while he profeſſed to grant to each member an equal right to judge with himſelf, was the only perſon, it ſeems in their apprehenſion, who governed their church. Againſt this conduct they remonſtrate in the memorial which they ſent to him; and obſerve, "As to the government of "the congregation we ſhall not ſtickle for any name, though we "do not love the unſcriptural phraſe *Independency*. And as to "the expreſſion *Preſbyterian*, from the word *preſbyter*, we know "it is ſcriptural, for it occurs times almoſt unnumbered in the "Bible, as any one may ſee that has a Concordance, by looking at "the word *elder*, *elders*, which is the Engliſh tranſlation for the "word *preſbyter*, *preſbyters*. But we will not ſtrive about words. "Our determination is, however, that we will not be governed "by a *ſingle* perſon, for that is neither Preſbytery nor Independency, old nor new, but is a mere arbitrary government, like "*Popery* or *Epiſcopacy on a ſmall ſcale*; and this is a condition "that we cannot depart from, as it is contrary to our original "contract when we came together as miniſter and people.

"If our miniſter," ſay they again, "chooſes to take *the deacons* "as a *ſeſſion* or eccleſiaſtical council, to rule along with himſelf, "we are pleaſed. If this does not ſuit him, we agree that ſeven, "nine, or a greater number of men be choſen by mutual conſent "of miniſter and congregation, and as many of the preſent deacons among them as can be agreed upon, and let theſe act as "*repreſentatives* of the church or congregation." After which they tell him again, that they will not be governed by him alone. See p. 51. and 52. of Ballentine's Obſervations. Whether this repreſentation was true in the extent which they ſo frequently and ſtrongly affirm, I do not pretend to ſay. At any rate it is certain, as Mr. Ballentine acknowledges (p. 95.), that their charges were juſt in a particular inſtance, for without conſulting

woman, or child, for ſuch ſometimes, from early piety, are received to that privilege, a ruler in the church. In Preſbytery, if a perſon feels himſelf aggrieved by the deciſion of a Seſſion, he may appeal to a Preſbytery, from that to a Synod, and from that to a General Aſſembly, the ſuperior court being in every inſtance a check upon the inferior, having power to reverſe its acts and deeds. In Independency however, the deciſion of the firſt court is completely final, and the injured can appeal to no other ſuperior tribunal upon earth. Whatever then may be the *conduct* of Preſbyterians and Independents, ſuppoſing the rulers, upon each of theſe plans, to be equally faithful and equally conſcientious (and, to give juſtice to the argument, this muſt be

deacons, or members, or a ſingle individual, ſo far as is ſpecified, he expelled a member from the communion of his church.

To theſe examples of tyranny among Independent rulers, were it conſidered as neceſſary, many others might be added, to prove that the people, however flattered by them with the appearance of power, and with the ſolicitation of their requeſt before any deciſion is made, have frequently only the ſhew. Of theſe I ſhall at preſent only mention one. Two reſpectable miniſters lately, while travelling through England, happened to be preſent in an Independent church, where alſo there were another ſtranger miniſter and gentleman. After the ſervices connected with preaching were finiſhed, the paſtor proceeded to diſpenſe the ſacrament, and having conſecrated the elements, announced to the congregation, as if to aſk their conſent, that this ſtranger clergyman and gentleman propoſed that day to eat with them the ſupper. Upon uttering however theſe words, without waiting a moment for the conſent of the members, he turned to the ſtrangers, and, after participating himſelf, delivered to them the bread and cup. Was not this however, and the fact can be eſtabliſhed by inconteſtable evidence, a mere tantalizing of the members of this congregation? Was it not a pretending to conſult them about the communication of a moſt ſolemn and important privilege, while yet it was plainly and avowedly declared that their opinion was not to be regarded at all?

ſuppoſed), I contend that the *Preſbyterian form* of government is better fitted than that of Independency, to prevent tyranny, and ſecure impartial equity to the people.

"The diſtinguiſhing feature of Preſbytery," you ſay (p. 28.), "is the ſyſtem of repreſentation." The miniſter and elders of a particular congregation govern that congregation; the miniſters and elders of a number of congregations, called a Preſbytery, judge of caſes which come before them by appeal againſt the ſentence of any particular Seſſion; and the miniſters and elders of a number of Preſbyteries, denominated a Synod, decide upon thoſe references which are made to them againſt the determination of any particular Preſbytery; as an Aſſembly, again, does upon that of any particular Synod, as well as deliberates about matters of general importance. "In an Independent church however," you remark (p. 30.), "nothing is decided by repre-"ſentation. Whatever is done by thoſe who are "appointed to rule, is carried on in the preſence of the "general body, and with their conſent. While an "Independent church thus aſſumes the ſole government "of its own affairs, it is amenable to no ſociety of men "under heaven. In reference to its own members, its "deciſion is final, and it pretends to interfere with "none elſe. It will be recollected (p. 47.), that "this peculiarity of Preſbytery conſiſts in the authority "of the repreſentatives of a church of Chriſt, as "diſtinguiſhed from the perſonal conviction of the "individual members of it. Now we have no heſitation "in aſſerting, that this diſtinguiſhing feature of Preſby-"tery is directly oppoſed to the general ſpirit, as well "as ſome of the expreſs precepts of the word of God. "Every one will allow that Chriſtianity is a ſpiritual "religion; and it ſeems a neceſſary principle in ſuch a "religion, that every one be convinced in his own

" mind. The conſcience of the individual here has a " moſt extenſive ſphere of influence. Its approbation is " eſſentially neceſſary to the exiſtence of any act of " acceptable worſhip. Whatſoever is not of faith is ſin. " The moment that compulſion is introduced, ſpiritual " worſhip is deſtroyed. This general poſition, I believe, " few will diſpute; but mark how it affects the caſe in " queſtion. What is the meaning of the *authority* " veſted in a Preſbytery, of that power by which they " can command any one under their juriſdiction to act " according to their will? Does not the very exiſtence of " this authority imply the neceſſity of it? Does it not " prove that advice is not ſufficient; that the conſcience " of the individual is not convinced; that ſomething " more powerful than perſuaſion muſt be reſorted to? " There could be no room for authority, if conviction " were deemed neceſſary, becauſe it is only by inſtruc- " tion and perſuaſion that it is produced. Like the " ſenſitive plant, it ſhrinks at the gentleſt touch of " power, and the rude intruder muſt be completely " withdrawn before it again exert its energy. On theſe " principles, I conſider the authority of Preſbytery as " ſtanding on a moſt unſcriptural baſis."

Here, Sir, before I advert to your different remarks, I would notice a very ſtriking and palpable inconſiſtency between your view of the government and diſcipline of your churches, and that which is delivered by another miniſter in your connection, no leſs diſtinguiſhed for his preſent zeal againſt our Preſbyterian Eſtabliſhment, than for the extent and accuracy of the knowledge of your eccleſiaſtical conſtitution which, in the opinion of his followers, he poſſeſſes. " *Whatever*," you affirm, " is done by thoſe who rule in your congregations, is " carried on *in the preſence* of the general body, and with " their *conſent*." " It ſeems by no means agreeable to " the directions given to the primitive churches," ſays

that gentleman however, in his lecture upon Acts xv. (p. 34. 35.), "that *every measure*, however trifling or "obvious, ſhould be brought *before the church* for "general diſcuſſion, or for obtaining a public declaration "*of the opinion of each member* before the office-bearers "preſume to put it in practice. From theſe, it is plain "that the office-bearers are to feed the flock; that is, "to govern them by inſtruction and perſuaſion accord-"ing to the word of God. In doing this, they are "entitled, nay, bound to carry into effect the rules of "ſcripture, and *to require obedience from the church to thoſe "rules when laid before them.* A different conduct de-"prives the church of the benefit of government, muſt "give continual encouragement to diſſenſion, and is "likely to make diſcipline degenerate into an engine "of faction.

"Nothing again," adds he (p. 35.), "is leſs "likely to ſerve the cauſe of truth, or even the cauſe "of Chriſtian liberty, than making every thing that "ought to be done, wait for diſcuſſion in full aſſembly. "If the church contains the collective wiſdom, it con-"tains alſo the collective ignorance of the brethren: if "it combines their gifts and their grace, it combines "alſo their infirmities and corruption. Where every "thing muſt undergo diſcuſſion, ſome may be in danger "of thinking they have laws to make, inſtead of laws "to obey. A few of the moſt active ſpirit and readieſt "elocution will become the real movers and managers "in every buſineſs; and a part will thus be put for the "whole. When they are agreed, every thing muſt be "complied with: when they are at variance, every thing "muſt be objected to. *No tyranny is ſo bad as that of a "cabal;* that is, of thoſe who are uppermoſt for the "moment in the fermentation of anarchy. Debate, "when indulged, is favourable to the introduction of "this ſort of tyranny. It heats the paſſions, warps the

" judgment; hurries men to meaſures of violence and " precipitation; engages them to the ſide which they " happen to have taken; inclines them to contention, " and tedious conſultation, about matters of the moſt " trivial importance; and makes them be ever on the " watch to ſatisfy a reſtleſs diſpoſition, by ſeizing an " opportunity to interfere. In ſhort, *thoſe who moſt need* " *reſtraint*, are, by ſuch means, in danger of being led " to ſet it at defiance; while the peaceful, and thoſe to " whom *the government is committed nominally*, are *terrified* " and *chained down* by the turbulence of *the reſt*."

Here I am certain that you cannot fail to perceive the very ſatisfactory refutation of your ſentiments in particular, and of thoſe of Independents in general, with regard to the degree of eccleſiaſtical power which ſhould be granted to rulers, that is contained in theſe words, even of a fellow-labourer in your vineyard. In them it is affirmed in the plaineſt terms, that *every meaſure* ought not to be diſcuſſed *in the preſence* of church-members, and their opinion and concurrence aſked before a deciſion is made, becauſe, if this were done, the church would be *deprived of the benefit of government*, continual encouragement would be given to diſſenſion, and diſcipline would degenerate into an engine of faction. In them, alſo, it is maintained in terms no leſs explicit, that the governors are entitled, nay, *bound*, to carry into effect the rules of ſcripture, and to require *obedience* from the church to thoſe rules *when laid before them; i. e.* (as is evident from the connection) without previouſly conſulting them. And the reaſons which are aſſigned for allowing the rulers to determine in *inferior* matters, without the advice of the brethren, are much more concluſive for their authoritative deciſion in thoſe which are more important, without their aſſiſtance. If leſs *intereſting* points, and points which are *obvious*, are not to wait for diſcuſſion in full aſſembly, becauſe, if the church contain the collective

wiſdom, it contains alſo the collective ignorance of the brethren; and if it combines their gifts and their grace, it combines alſo their infirmities and corruption; much more muſt it be the duty of the rulers of the church themſelves, to decide authoritatively on more momentous matters, and matters which are confeſſedly more difficult and doubtful *. As I am perſuaded, then,

* Not only is it manifeſt from the argument of Mr. Ewing which is here ſtated, that it is the office-bearers alone, even upon his *own principles*, who are to judge in important as well as trivial matters without conſulting the members; but whatever *he intended*, the ſame thing ſeems to be evident from his other arguments. It is the former alone, he ſays, who are to decide upon points which are trifling and obvious, becauſe, as he before affirms, "it is "the office-bearers alone who are authorized in ſcripture *to feed* "the flock," or, as he explains it, "to govern them by inſtruction "and perſuaſion according to the word of God." But when the office-bearers are required in the ſacred volume *to feed*, or, as he interprets it, to *govern* the flock, if it entitle them to determine in *inferior* matters, and matters which are *obvious*, without conſulting them, is it not equally plain from it, that they muſt be much more authorized by it to exerciſe this power in more difficult points? And if the office-bearers only, in his opinion, ſhould judge in theſe leſs intereſting caſes, becauſe, as he alſo aſſerts, according to the paſſages which he quotes, "they are entitled, "nay, bound by the word of God, in governing the church, *to* "*carry into effect* the rules of ſcripture, and to require *obedience* "from the church to thoſe rules *when laid before them*;" the very ſame expreſſions, when employed in ſcripture reſpecting *their power in general*, with the obedience of the members, ſeem as clearly to intimate, that, in *every* point, the elders are to judge without ſoliciting the opinion and conſent of the members. Are *the rules of ſcripture*, which he admits, from theſe paſſages, that they are to carry into effect, only *trifles?* or do they not comprehend *every thing* the moſt difficult and important, which can be the ſubject of determination in an eccleſiaſtical court? If then, as he contends, the office-bearers of the church are warranted, by the paſſages which he produces in the margin, to carry into effect *the laws of Chriſt* without conſulting the opinion of the

that you will not conſider this gentleman as blindly attached to the cauſe of Preſbytery, or in the leaſt diſpoſed to promote its intereſts, I beg you will attend to the tendency of his reaſoning, and, after *adjuſting the*

members, and to require obedience from the members to them, when laid before them; and if theſe laws, as is evident, include not only what is trivial and obvious, but what is *important* and *eſſential;* is it not inconteſtable, even from the arguments of *this gentleman*, who profeſſes to be an *Independent*, that the office-bearers alone, as Preſbyterians maintain, are to determine in matters which are *important* and *eſſential*, as well as thoſe which are *obvious* and *trivial?*

In ſhort, if it is only in things which are obvious and trivial that the office-bearers alone, in the opinion of Mr. Ewing, are authorized to judge without conſulting the members, *who* are *the perſons* that are to determine whether the matters which are to be the ſubject of judgment upon any particular occaſion, are trivial and obvious, or intereſting and doubtful? It cannot be the people, for that would make the men *over whom* this extraordinary power *was to be exerciſed*, the judges of the extent to which it was to be employed, which is conſidered as impolitic in all proper governments; and it cannot be the office-bearers, for that would be to make the men who are *to exerciſe* this power, judges of the extent in which they were to exert it, which has always been conſidered as no leſs prepoſterous. Unleſs then he can point out a ſatisfactory ſtandard, *ſeparate from the opinion of the office-bearers and the people*, by which it can be aſcertained what things are trivial and obvious, and what are difficult and important, the commiſſion of ſuch power as that for which he pleads, to the elders of the church, at leaſt upon the principles of *Independent* ſocieties, whatever they may think of it, ſeems in the higheſt degree to be dangerous. Their office-bearers, it appears, according to this gentleman, are themſelves to judge in things trivial and obvious, without granting the members a ſingle word or vote; and, at the ſame time, ſo far as can be diſcovered, it is *the office-bearers alone* who are to ſay *when* they are to exerciſe this extraordinary power, and erect themſelves into the only judges in the ſociety. If this be conſiſtent with your notions of liberty, or the firſt principles of Independency, I ſhould be happy to ſee upon what grounds it can be eſtabliſhed?

differences among *yourſelves*, honeſtly declare, whether it does not at once *flatly contradict* and completely overthrow your favourite poſition, That eccleſiaſtical rulers are not authorized authoritatively to decide upon *any* point which falls under their cognizance, without previouſly requeſting the preſence and counſel of the members of the church?

I would obſerve, moreover, that you yourſelf have admitted a caſe (and it has frequently occurred) in which, even in an Independent church, authoritative power muſt be exerciſed by your rulers. "Suppoſe," you ſay (p. 50.), "a caſe of diſcipline to occur in an "Independent church, in which a difference of opinion "obtained, how far a charge was diſtinctly proved. "The church muſt act in one way or another. If the "party be excluded againſt whom the charge is brought, "thoſe who think him not guilty, will take offence at "the meaſure. If, on the other hand, he be continued "in communion without reproof, thoſe who think him "guilty, will be equally offended." A deciſion notwithſtanding muſt neceſſarily be made, and the minority you admit muſt either ſubmit to the majority, or withdraw from their communion. Now, in this inſtance, I would aſk you, if an authoritative power be not uſed by *the majority* of this Independent church, without regard to the will of the minority, as much as by any claſs of

If the office-bearers, in fine, are to judge in *leſs intereſting* matters only, and are to take the judgment of the people in *more important* affairs, does not this intimate, that though they are fit for determining what are conſidered as *trifles*, they are not equal to the determination of things which are *intricate* and *intereſting*, and need the *ſuperior or combined information of the members?* And that though it would be dangerous, from the collected ignorance of the latter, as Mr. Ewing affirms, to allow them to judge in things obvious and trivial, it is *perfectly ſafe* to permit them to judge in things dubious and important?

Presbyterian rulers? and if they do not act as decidedly, without any regard to the convictions of their brethren? Besides, I would inquire, whether this must not be the case in Independent, as well as Presbyterian churches, *in every instance* (and they cannot be few) in which a question is carried and acted upon by a *majority* against a minority? Is not *the opinion* of the latter uniformly disregarded? Is not the will of the former executed *as a law?* Can *any* religious society *exist* without it? Does not this unquestionably involve *of necessity*, as much authority as the decision of any Presbyterian court? And is not the minority obliged as readily to submit to this authoritative determination, if it be an inferior point—or if it be a fundamental article, as universally to separate from their former brethren, if they are so disposed, as in Presbyterian churches?

When a majority, in a word, of any of your churches determines against a minority, that a brother who has happened to offend before all, should be *rebuked* before all, that he may be taught by it to be ashamed, I should be glad to know, if it is only a *simple advice* which is delivered? And when such a majority decides against a minority, that a brother is to be *excommunicated*, and their decision is fulfilled, I should be happy to be informed, if it is only a *simple opinion* which is stated? This, I believe, you will hardly maintain: and consequently, since in these and all other instances, where the will of a majority is carried and acted upon against a minority, from the very nature of things, authority is exercised, I hold it to be unfair and contradictory in Independents to declaim against Presbyterians, when they claim for *their rulers*, the *same portion* of authority which is necessarily assumed by the majority of *the members* in each of their congregations; and without which, whatever *persuasion* might be employed, and whatever *advices* might be delivered, not one of their societies can be conceived to exist.

You affirm, however, that to exercise authority without the presence and consent of the members of the church is inconsistent with the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, one of the laws of which is, that before a person can perform any acceptable act of worship, he must have, in some measure, a conviction of its fitness and propriety. And you contend, that since a man must first be convinced by persuasion, before he can render any such obedience, authority is unnecessary, for if authority is used as well as persuasion, it seems to imply that the latter is insufficient. But in answer to this I would observe, that though authority is claimed by Presbyterian rulers over their members, it is not an *unreasonable* nor *imperious* authority. They consider themselves as the *servants* of the Lord Jesus: the subjection which they demand from the members of their churches, is not to themselves, or to their *will*, as you insinuate (p. 47.), but to what they consider as the will of their blessed Master; and the obedience which they require to their decisions in his name, is not, as you allege, blind and compulsatory, but enlightened and voluntary. Nor do they barely deliver their commands, and enjoin *immediate* and *implicit* submission (as one would imagine from your representation); but while they declare authoritatively whatever appears to them to be the mind of Christ, and command all cordially to obey it, they, no less than Independents, are careful to state the grounds upon which their decision rests, and to afford to their members every mean by which their consciences may be satisfied, and this enlightened and voluntary obedience produced. Their public deliberations in every instance, where it is fit, are open to the hearing and examination of their members; and there seems to be *nothing in Presbytery* to prevent every discussion which is proper to be carried on before an Independent, to be carried on also before a Presbyterian congregation. The reasons, besides, for every deter-

mination are not only uniformly ſtated, as has been already mentioned, but if any of their members either do not underſtand their meaning, or perceive their force, they are never denied an opportunity of obtaining ſatisfaction by private converſation, or correſpondence with the rulers. If, in any caſe, in ſhort, of inferior magnitude, they cannot acquieſce in the deciſion of theſe rulers, forbearance can be granted to them no leſs than among Independents; and if, in any caſe, it be neceſſary to ſeparate, becauſe it is of ſuperior importance, and they cannot comply, they are not *compelled* to obey, but are allowed to ſeparate no leſs than among them.

There is one point however, and but *one*, in which Preſbyterians appear to differ from Independents on the ſubject before us, and on this you ſeem to lay conſiderable ſtreſs; namely, that though the obedience which is required from their members by the former, is as free and as enlightened as that which is demanded from their members by the latter, Preſbyterian rulers do not admit their people to judge and vote upon the propriety of their meaſures along with themſelves, before they are finally adopted. But to this fact the words of Mr. Ewing, which I have quoted, furniſh a complete and ſatisfactory anſwer. Nothing, undoubtedly, more directly tends to *ſubvert the order and government* of the church, as that gentleman affirms, than to allow every member a right to judge and vote upon the meaſures of rulers, and to oblige theſe rulers to retract or carry forward any of theſe meaſures, only in as far as it is agreeable to a majority of the people. It is, in fact, conſtituting thoſe who ſhould *be ruled*, the *rulers*, while the deciſions of thoſe who are dignified with that name are entirely ſubject to their determination. Their opinions, it is evident, where this ſyſtem is adopted, can only be paſſed into laws, when it pleaſes the majority of thoſe who *are to obey them*; and

when it does not pleaſe them, they are completely rejected. All the power, therefore, which is veſted in the rulers, according to this plan, is merely nominal; and amounts ſimply to a right to ſtate thoſe meaſures which they have in contemplation to adopt, and to preſide in the meeting during the deliberation of the members, while the right of judging, as to the propriety of theſe meaſures, is committed to the latter. As therefore it ſeems plain, that to grant to the members, according to this ſyſtem, a right to vote upon the propoſals of the rulers, is utterly ſubverſive of the power of theſe rulers, and reduces them to the ſituation of thoſe who are *ruled*, while it gives the ſupreme authority to the *multitude*, the greater part of whom, according to Mr. Ewing, are unqualified for judging—as this ſyſtem, I ſay, is attended with theſe conſequences, it appears to be totally inadmiſſible, and that it is the province of the rulers, without the aſſiſtance of the members, to govern the affairs of the church of God.

If authority, moreover, as exerciſed by Preſbyterians, as you evidently inſinuate, is not conſiſtent with liberty of conſcience, I demand how it is conſiſtent with it, when exerciſed by the *majority* of an *Independent* congregation over the *minority?* and if it be conſidered as *unneceſſary*, as practiſed by Preſbyterians, as you explicitly aſſert, becauſe *advice* and *perſuaſion* appear to you ſufficient for the government of the church, I aſk how it is *requiſite*, when aſſumed by ſuch a *majority* over the *minority*, who muſt either ſubmit, or renounce their communion? Cannot advice and perſuaſion among *them* too ſuffice? Is it replied, as you have done (p. 51.), that the exerciſe of authority in ſuch caſes, among Independents, "is an unavoidable reſult of ſocial worſhip, and of the "formation of Chriſtian churches, as long as imperfec-"tion of knowledge and of character remains?" I affirm, that ſince you allow that ſocial worſhip and imperfection

at once of knowledge and of character exiſt alſo among Preſbyterians, among them too, even on your own principles, you muſt grant it to be neceſſary; while at the ſame time I contend, that for the reaſons which have been mentioned, or may yet be mentioned, it ſhould be committed to the rulers, and to the rulers alone, without admitting the members to be their adviſers. I conceive it beſides to be a very evident truth, that whatever is delivered by *any* claſs of rulers, even though ſubordinate, whether ſacred or civil, muſt be much more *regarded* when clothed with authority, than when communicated ſimply as an advice or admonition. It is true, that, till previouſly convinced of its propriety, in many caſes, in civil, and always in ſacred matters, no man can rightly perform any obedience to any government, whether civil or eccleſiaſtic. But what would we think of the man who ſhould affirm, that becauſe it is requiſite to ſtate to the people, very often in civil, and always in ſacred matters, the reaſons for which they are called to yield their obedience, it is *unneceſſary* and *improper* for the rulers to clothe their communications to them, requiring this obedience, in the language of *authority*, and that they ought ſimply to enforce it by *advice* and *perſuaſion*? Would not ſuch an aſſertion be rejected with contempt, as not only ſubverſive of one of the ſtrongeſt preſervatives of public order and ſocial peace, but as repugnant even to the common ſenſe of mankind, which, by uniform practice, has conſtantly declared that *advice* is inſufficient, and that the exerciſe of *authority*, in every government, is abſolutely eſſential to ſecure the ſubordination and obedience of the ſubjects?

The authority, then, for which I argue, I wiſh it to be remembered, is not intended to *ſuperſede* but to promote inquiry; is not deſigned to compel men, as you maintain (p. 47.), *without conviction* to believe and obey their eccleſiaſtical rulers, but to preſent to them more com-

manding incitements to examine, and more powerful though ſecondary enforcements and obligations to obey the truth. For this purpoſe, it inveſts the governors of the church with a power, not merely to declare to her members what appears to be the mind and will of Chriſt, and to *adviſe* them to obey it, but with a power to inform them, that if, upon examination and reflection, they are not diſpoſed to ſubmit to it, they can no longer be entitled to the privileges of his people. The exerciſe of this power in every church, whether Independent or Preſbyterian, either by the many or the few, I apprehend is eſſential to its very exiſtence; for it requires but little obſervation to perceive that neither the purity nor the government of any ſociety could long be preſerved, where advices only were delivered to the members. And, in ſhort, I muſt remark, that while Independents themſelves, though they affect to reject it, grant to the majority, in each of their congregations, the *very ſame* authority which Preſbyterians claim for their eccleſiaſtical rulers, were they to lay aſide this authority, and act ſimply by advice and perſuaſion, the moſt awful conſequences muſt enſue from it to their churches. Ancient chaos, in a more fearful form, would once more reſume her horrid reign; confuſion and anarchy would univerſally prevail; and order and government, in their lawleſs ſocieties, would be completely annihilated.

In fine, I would obſerve that the various terms alſo employed in ſcripture to expreſs the power conferred upon church-rulers, ſeem plainly to intimate that they are entitled to govern thoſe over whom they are placed, not merely by advice and perſuaſion, but by authoritative rule; and to govern them thus authoritatively, without previouſly conſulting them as to their opinion and concurrence. As an examination of theſe terms will enable us the better to aſcertain at once either

the fallacy or the force of the preceding reaſoning, let us proceed, though briefly, to conſider a few of them; together with ſome others, deſcriptive of that obedience which is due from the members of a church to their rulers; and, with an examination of their import, conclude this Letter.

In reviewing, then, the terms employed in ſcripture to denote the former, we ſee that it is compared to the power of a parent over his family; for ſays Paul (1 Tim. iii. 4, 5.), "a biſhop," or overſeer, "muſt be one who "rules well his own houſe, having his children in ſub- "jection with all gravity; (for if a man know not how "to rule his own houſe, how ſhall he take care of the "church of God?") Now it is evidently here affirmed, that a power, correſponding in ſome meaſure to that which is poſſeſſed by a parent, or maſter over his family, is veſted in the rulers of the Chriſtian church, and that the latter muſt be exerciſed by them with judgment and prudence, if they are parents or maſters, before they can be admitted to enjoy the former. But it is evident, that the power of a parent over his family is in the ſtricteſt ſenſe authoritative, as well as perſuaſive; that while he ſhould employ perſuaſion, he is inveſted alſo with authority, and can lawfully exerciſe it whenever it is requiſite; and that it is the duty of his children to be ſubject to his commands, without waiting till their opinion be aſked and adopted. Unleſs, then, the power which ſhould be exerciſed alſo by church-rulers is authoritative, as well as perſuaſive, the reaſoning of the Apoſtle, in the paſſage before us, would be totally inconcluſive. It would be ſaying in effect, that before a man can be qualified for the exerciſe of a *lower* degree of power, a power of advice, he muſt have exerciſed aright a *much higher* degree of it, or a power of authority. As ſuch a ſpecies of argumentation however is utterly unworthy of the inſpired Apoſtle, we muſt certainly reject the interpretation which

leads to it, and admit that the rulers of the Chriſtian church, like the parent of a family and the maſter of a houſe, have a power not only of advice, but of authority.

Their power is repreſented likewiſe as reſembling that of an *overſeer*, who does not merely preſide and adviſe, but authoritatively directs what he wiſhes to be done by thoſe over whom he is appointed; for in Acts xx. 28. all the elders of the church of Epheſus, and they alone, in the ſenſe there intended, are affirmed to have been made overſeers of the flock, επισκοποι *. But if ſuch an overſight as that which we have mentioned, in government as well as doctrine, be here aſſerted to be committed to the elders, and the elders excluſively, it ſeems naturally to follow, that, like all other *official* overſeers, they muſt have an authoritative ſuperintendence of thoſe over whom they are placed, and a ſuperintendence which entitles them to preſcribe to church-members particular acts of ſervice and obedience, without previouſly conſulting their opinion and advice. This idea is ſtrongly confirmed, by reflecting that this very word is uſed in a celebrated Greek tranſlation of the Old Teſtament (Numb. xxxi. 14. and 2 Kings xi. 15.) to denote the authoritative ſuperintendence of *military officers*, the captains of hundreds, and the captains of thouſands, over their men; a claſs of governors who were not accuſtomed merely to give *advices* to their ſoldiers, or to requeſt their *conſent* before they delivered their orders.

Their power, beſides, is deſcribed as ſimilar to that of the *elders* who judged in the gates of the cities of Iſrael,

* Compare 1 Tim. iii.: from which paſſage it is manifeſt, that it is an overſight, not as that of one Chriſtian over another, but *official* and authoritative, and which is entirely peculiar to the *miniſters* of the church, that is here intended; for it is aſſerted in that place, that only thoſe Chriſtians who were already overſeers in the former ſenſe, and had the particular qualities there ſpecified, were fitted for the *overſight there mentioned.*

for they are frequently in the New Teſtament diſtinguiſhed by their name. See 1 Tim. v. 17. &c. Now, ſince the name elder when applied to the judges of ancient Iſrael, and ſince the correſponding terms, ſenators and aldermen in modern times, uniformly denote authoritative officers, muſt not the very ſame name when given to the rulers of the Chriſtian church, import in them too a title to authority * ?

In ſhort, not only are they diſtinguiſhed by theſe names, but they are characterized by others, if poſſible, ſtill more expreſſive of this authority. Thrice are they deſcribed in the very ſame chapter (Heb. xiii. 7. 17. 24.) by the title of *rulers*, ἡγεμονες, which, though the weakeſt of the appellations beſtowed upon them, and though it originally denotes merely guides or conductors, ſignifies *very frequently* in the Septuagint, and the beſt claſſic authors, civil rulers, and almoſt *uniformly* in the New Teſtament, *authoritative governors*. It is applied by Peter (1 Epiſtle ii. 14.) to *ſubordinate governors*, to whom Chriſtians are to ſubmit, as well as to the king, who is ſupreme; by Matthew (chap. x. 18.), to denote thoſe *governors* and kings before whom they were to be brought for their adherence to the truth; by the celebrated Greek tranſlators, in their verſion of Micah iii. 9. to the *political heads* of the houſe of Jacob; in their verſion of Deut. i. 13. to the *civil rulers*, whom Moſes appointed over the hundreds and thouſands of the children of Iſrael; and in their verſion of Dan. iii. 2. to the *go-*

* We know alſo, that the rulers of the Jewiſh ſynagogue were commonly diſtinguiſhed by the name of *elders*. Hence, in Acts xiii. 15. and Mark v. 22. what is rendered in our verſion "the rulers of the ſynagogue," the old Syriac verſion tranſlates by a word ſignifying *elders* or *ſeniores*. And hence, moſt probably, from a ſimilarity of power between them and the rulers of the Chriſtian church, the ſcripture has transferred to the latter their name.

vernors of the various provinces of Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar; by Xenophon, in his Anabaſis, to the *general* or *commander* of the Grecian army; by Lucian, in his Pſeudomantis, tom. i. p. 904. to the governor of Bithynia (ὁ τοτε ἡγουμενος Βιθυνιας); by Joſephus, in his Antiquities, book xviii. chap. iv. to Pontius Pilate, the *governor* of Judea; by Matthew, in his Goſpel, chap. xxvii. no leſs than thrice, and by Luke, in his Goſpel, chap. xx. once, to the ſame perſon; by the latter Evangeliſt (Acts vii. 10.) to Joſeph, when made *governor* by Pharaoh over Egypt, and all his houſe; and twice again, by the ſame hiſtorian (Acts xxiii. 24. 26.) to Felix the *governor*. With the utmoſt propriety therefore does Beza, in his note upon the thirteenth chapter of the Hebrews, remark, that the application of this term to the governors of the church, not only imports that they are veſted with authority, but "with *very great authority*;" for, "it is," adds he, "verbum auctoritatis maximæ," a word expreſſive of *very great* authority. And, as if even this did not ſuffice, they are deſcribed by another title ſtill ſtronger and more energetic, προϊσταμενοι; which is rendered in our Bibles (Rom. xii. 8. and 1 Tim. v. 17.) "rulers," and in 1 Theſſ. v. 12. "thoſe who *are over* "Chriſtians in the Lord." This term, we are aſſured by Stephens, in his Theſaurus, is very frequently given to political *governors*; and is the very word employed in 1 Tim. iii. 4, 5. already quoted, to ſignify the authority of a parent over his family, or of a maſter over his houſe; and in Titus iii. 8. 14. (compare Conſtantinus's and Parkhurſt's Lexicons), to expreſs the command which a Chriſtian ſhould endeavour to attain over himſelf, ſo as to excel in good works *. And this very term, as will afterwards be proved, is very often uſed by Plato, and

* Theſe are all the places, ſo far as is recollected, where it occurs in the New Teſtament.

Xenophon, and Thucydides, and Herodotus, and Demoſthenes, and Ariſtotle, for the *magiſtrates* of cities, and *governors* of countries. Since therefore theſe terms, which are ſo frequently employed in the beſt claſſic authors, and ancient verſions and ſacred oracles, to ſignify ſubordinate *rulers* and *governors*, are applied to *the elders* of the Chriſtian church, and ſince *obedience* is required from the people to their elders at the very time when they are diſtinguiſhed by theſe names, is it not plain that they muſt be poſſeſſed of a power not merely to *adviſe* and *direct*, but authoritatively to govern the church of Chriſt, whatever may be the degree and extent of that authority? And if it be affirmed, that notwithſtanding the application of theſe names to them, they are ſtill to be viewed only as *guides* and *adviſers*, upon the ſame principle may it not be aſſerted, that though they are given alſo to Joſeph, Felix, and Pilate, and the different rulers of the provinces of Babylon, *they* ought to be conſidered as no more than adviſers of the people? and that when Pilate ſaid concerning our Lord, "Take him and crucify him," he did no more than give an advice? But if ſuch an inference, when applied to ſubordinate political governors, would moſt certainly be conſidered as completely ridiculous, muſt it not be equally ridiculous, when applied to ſubordinate eccleſiaſtical rulers, who are undeniably diſtinguiſhed by the very ſame appellations?

And, upon the whole, the terms likewiſe, as we have already remarked, which are employed in ſcripture to denote the *obedience* of the people to their rulers, ſeem to intimate, that the latter are inveſted with a power not only of advice but authority. Not only is one word (πειθεσθε) uſed to expreſs their obedience (Heb. xiii. 17.), which ſignifies ſometimes to yield to perſuaſion, and at other times to obey or ſubmit to power and autho-

rity *; but another word (ὑπειχω), which is not only rendered by Leigh, and Hedericus, and Parkhurſt, and Beza, and the Vulgate, together with our tranſlators, "*ſubmit*," but is frequently taken by the Greek writers, according to the teſtimony of one of our moſt learned lexicographers, "to ſignify *obedience* with *ſubmiſſive reſpect*." A third word is uſed (ὑποτασσω—See 1 Cor. xvi. 16.) to expreſs their obedience, if poſſible, ſtill ſtronger, and which is very often employed to denote even the moſt entire and complete ſubjection which is mentioned in ſcripture †. It is a metaphorical expreſſion, derived originally from the ſubjection and obedience

* Thus, James iii. 3. (and this is the leaſt energetic of all the terms deſcriptive of their obedience), "We put bits in the horſes "mouths, that they may *obey* us," προς το πειθεσθαι αυτους ἡμιν: thus, too, Titus iii. 1. "Put them in mind to obey magiſtrates," πειθαρχειν, &c. Thus, alſo, Homer in his Iliad, book i. line 79th, ſpeaking of Agamemnon, the captain-general of the Greeks, ſays, Ὃς μεγα παντων Αργειων κρατεει, και οἱ πειθονται Αχαιοι; "Who rules ſupreme over all the Greeks, and whom the Greeks "*obey*,"—not comply with in his advice. And in line 33d, mentioning the obedience of Chryſes to the command of this prince, accompanied with the moſt terrible denunciations of puniſhment, he ſays, Ὡς εφατ' εδδεισεν δ' ὁ γερων, και επειθετο μυθῳ; "He ſpoke, and the old man trembled, and obeyed his word,"—not certainly acquieſced in his advice from perſuaſion, for every feeling of his ſoul revolted againſt his obedience. In the ſenſe, moreover, of obedience it appears evidently to be taken in this paſſage in the Hebrews, if we attend to its connection with the verb ὑπειχω, and its being uſed to denote the duty of Chriſtians to their ἡγεμονες, which is rendered by our tranſlators rulers, and which, as we have already ſhewn, moſt frequently ſignifies governors. Mere compliance with advice, however, is not ſo much the duty of inferiors to *rulers, as ſuch*, as obedience is; and conſequently our tranſlators, in the paſſage before us, have very judiciouſly rendered πειθεσθε "obey."

† And yet this very word denotes even the obedience, in the paſſage referred to, which was to be given to *deacons* in the execu-

of soldiers to their commanders, than which usually nothing is more submissive. It is employed to express the obedience of children to their parents, who unquestionably are possessed of authority over them; for it is the very word which denotes the subjection of the blessed Jesus to his parents, Luke ii. 51.; and is the same word which is used, 1 Tim. iii. 4. when it is said, "Having "his children in subjection with all gravity." It signifies the subjection of servants to their masters, who undoubtedly are invested with authority over them, and can prescribe to them whatever services they choose, without soliciting their consent and approbation. Thus, Tit. ii. 9. "Exhort servants to be obedient (ὑποτασσεσθαι) "unto their own masters, and to please them well in all "things; not answering them again:" and 1 Peter ii. 18. "Servants, be subject to your masters *with all fear*," ὑποτασσομενοι εν παντι φοβω. Besides, it is the most common expression for denoting the obedience of subjects to their civil rulers, who are entitled not merely to advise, but to govern them by the exercise of authority. Thus, Rom. xiii. 1. "Let every soul be subject to the "higher powers," ὑποτασσεσθω; and again, ver. 5. "Wherefore ye must needs be subject (ὑποτασσεσθαι), "not only for wrath, but for conscience sake." Thus, too, in Titus iii. 1. "Put them in mind to be subject to "principalities and powers," ὑποτασσεσθαι; and thus, likewise, in 1 Peter ii. 13, 14. "Submit yourselves to "every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake," ὑποταγητε. And, in short, although this word in a single instance be used *metaphorically*, to denote submission where no authority is possessed (1 Peter v. 5.), in every other instance it signifies submission from inferiors to superiors,

tion of *their* office, as well as the obedience which was to be yielded also to every higher office-bearer in his function, "who "helped with Paul, and laboured."

where, however diverſified, from the variety of the relation, that ſubjection may be, it always implies ſubmiſſion to *authority*. But if the moſt entire ſubmiſſion, not merely to advice but to authority, which the nature of the relation can poſſibly admit, be almoſt invariably denoted by this word, and if this very term be employed to expreſs the ſubmiſſion which is due from the members of the church to thoſe who are their rulers, is it not obvious that the latter are entitled, not merely to adviſe, but authoritatively to govern the church of Chriſt? And if it be alleged, that, though this term is employed in ſcripture to expreſs the obedience of Chriſtians to their rulers, it cannot be proved from it that they are to be ſubject to them, conſidered as inveſted with authority, any farther than they are diſpoſed to adopt their advice, upon the ſame principle it ought to be evinced, that as the ſame term is uſed to denote the ſubmiſſion of children to their parents, and ſervants to their maſters, and ſubjects to their civil governors, the latter are not entitled to claim from the former, in any inſtance, ſubjection to their authority, but ſimply acquieſcence in their counſels. But if ſuch a meaning would be conſidered as inadmiſſible, becauſe totally ſubverſive of the duties which are due in civil life to parents, and maſters, and magiſtrates, muſt it not be equally inadmiſſible in the preſent inſtance, becauſe no leſs ſubverſive, not merely of that acquieſcence in their advice, but of that *ſubjection* to their authority, which ſeems naturally to be ſuggeſted from it, as due from the people to their eccleſiaſtical rulers?

If the rulers of the church, then, are not entitled to authority, it would appear that the language of the ſacred oracles, though dictated by inſpiration, in this particular at leaſt, muſt be conſidered as incorrect. It has employed not merely one term, but a number of terms, which, in their natural, and unforced, and moſt frequent acceptation, plainly aſſign to eccleſiaſtical rulers an authoritative

power, while at the same time it is certain that such a power was never intended to be intrusted with them. Instead therefore of being fitted to make Christians perfect, and furnishing them thoroughly for every good work, has it not tended rather to bewilder and mislead the church, and led it to flatter that desire of authority which is so natural to man, by granting to her rulers, in every age, a degree of power which they ought never to have enjoyed? From this charge, moreover, it seems totally impossible to vindicate the scripture, unless it be supposed that the terms which it uses upon this interesting subject are just and accurate, are to be understood in their obvious and common signification, and are intended to suggest that ecclesiastical rulers are to govern the church not merely by advice and persuasion, but by the exercise of authority.

The sum then of what has been said in the preceding remarks is briefly this—That the rulers of the church in every age, according to Presbyterians, are invested not only with a power of advice, but of authority—That this power, however, is only ministerial and subordinate, not supreme and legislative—That this power, though decried and condemned by Independents, is the same with what is claimed by the majority of each of their different congregations over the minority—That it affords to all who are under its controul, every mean of information that is necessary to produce an enlightened and voluntary obedience—That forbearance can be granted in inferior matters, even where *it* is exercised, no less than among Independents, to all who cannot fully comply with its commands—And that in more important points where they cannot acquiesce, liberty is granted them to retire from that connection, no less than among them—That the exercise of this power is absolutely essential to the existence of society—that to admit the people to judge and vote before a decision is made, is only to

transfer it to them from the rulers—that such a transference constitutes those the *governors* of the church who are bound *to obey*—That the names bestowed in the sacred oracles upon ecclesiastical rulers, and the terms employed in them to describe the nature of the obedience of members, are directly contradictory to such a plan—And, in short, that the only thing which preserves order, and discipline, and government, even *in the congregations of Independents*, is their *practically* renouncing their favourite idea of administering only by advice and persuasion, and acting upon the *Presbyterian* principle of authority. To this it may be farther added, that if this form of government, which vests in the rulers the authority for which we contend, appears to be incompatible with *religious* liberty, because every member is not permitted to vote, and adopt or reject the decisions of the rulers, upon the same principle it may be demonstrated, that it is no less inconsistent with *civil liberty*, to commit to the rulers the *government* of the *state;* and that before any decision be made by the magistrates of a city, or county, or kingdom, the people should be convened, and their votes collected. But as such a principle would be considered as preposterous in civil polity, must it not be equally so in ecclesiastical government *, and consequently,

* How astonishing then, if such only be the authority for which Presbyterians contend, that it should be the ground of such virulent reprehension to Independents! One of them, before quoted (see Watt's Plain Proof, p. 176.), exclaims with much keenness against their office-bearers, for claiming a power "only *ministerially* "to determine controversies of faith, and cases of conscience." "Here," says he, "they determine not only how a man is to act, "and how he is to be treated outwardly; but, as it were, inter- "pose between man and his Maker, and dictate what he is to "believe." But will this writer prove, or will any Independent prove, that Presbyterian rulers assume a higher power, in the decision of these points, over their members, than is assumed by the majority of an Independent church over the minority? Or

muſt not that view of the dependence of the rulers on the votes of the members, to procure efficiency to their mea-

can they demonſtrate, that the former interpoſe more between Chriſtians and their Maker, in *their* communion, or dictate more to them what they are to believe, than is *neceſſarily* done, (though they ſeem to diſclaim it) by the majority to the minority in each of their churches?

" It is ſaid," adds this writer (p. 177.), " that the decrees of " their office-bearers, *if conſonant to the word of God*, are to be re- " ceived with ſubmiſſion. Weſtmin. Confeſ. chap. xxxi. ſect. iii. " This," ſays he, " ſeems, at firſt view, to remove the except- " tionableneſs of this power; but when the matter is viewed " more cloſely, the caſe alters. Whether are the courts them- " ſelves to decide, whether their decrees are conſonant to the " word of God; or, are thoſe who are to receive theſe decrees, to " judge of this every one for himſelf? The latter ſuppoſition, in " a great meaſure, deſtroys the idea of authority and ſubmiſſion. " We are to ſubmit to decrees as far as we think them right, " *i. e.* as far as we pleaſe. This ſeems not to be *ſubmiſſion*. This " abſurdity is avoided; the courts themſelves judge whether their " deciſions are, or are not, right. They generally affirm the de- " crees, and bind the church-members to the former decrees; and " alſo to their ſentence, that thoſe decrees are conſonant to the " word of God. And thus they bind them under ſanction of " excommunication."

To this, however, it is replied, by demanding whether the *majority* in an *Independent* congregation, when they paſs a decree, do not claim alſo an excluſive power of judging as to its conſonancy to the word of God, as much as the rulers of any Preſbyterian court? Do they not announce to all who are *to remain* in their communion, that they muſt receive that decree *as the mind of God*, as really as Preſbyterians do to the members of their churches? And do they not tell all who *apply to them for membership*, that they muſt admit ſuch decrees as a juſt repreſentation of *the mind of God* upon the points to which they relate, as much as the rulers of Preſbyterian churches? If the latter then, when they exerciſe this power over the members, are reprobated becauſe they aſſume what is denominated by Independents an undue authority, muſt not the ſame objections preſent themſelves againſt the former, who aſſume a power no leſs high and commanding? " Do not

ſures, which is held by Independents, be altogether rejected as ſubverſive of the adminiſtration of the church of Chriſt?

" they alſo *themſelves*," as well as the rulers in a Preſbyterian court, " judge whether their decrees are, or are not, right? Do " not they" as generally " affirm their decrees, and bind the " minority and every new applicant, as well as the church at " large, to receive theſe decrees; and alſo *to their ſentence, that theſe* " *decrees are conſonant to the word of God?* And do not they thus " bind them under ſanction of excommunication?" And, in ſhort, becauſe Preſbyterians invite their members to compare their decrees with the word of God, that when they receive theſe decrees, they may yield to them not a blind but an enlightened obedience, does this " deſtroy at once ſubmiſſion and authority?" If ſo, ſince, even by *the confeſſion of Independents*, this is all that is claimed by Preſbyterians, as far at leaſt as *their ſyſtem* is concerned, there is no more tyrannical authority or improper ſubjection, notwithſtanding all their aſſertions, among the one than among the other. It ſeems ſtrange, beſides, that the permiſſion which is granted by Preſbyterians to their members, to examine theſe decrees, and ſatisfy themſelves as to their propriety or impropriety, ſhould be conſidered by Independents as completely nullifying the authority of the rulers and the ſubmiſſion of the people. While no one is compelled to admit theſe decrees before examination and conviction, is not every one told, as in an Independent church, that if, upon inquiry, he will not obey theſe decrees, he cannot enjoy the privilege of membership? And where this is announced, however extenſive the liberty of inquiry which is permitted by Preſbyterian rulers to their members, and though they do not force them to admit their decrees or remain in their communion, any more than is done by the majority to the minority in Independent congregations, will it follow from this, that the authority of the one and the ſubmiſſion of the other are deſtroyed by ſuch privileges?

LETTER III.

SIR,

IN the preceding Letter I have attempted to ſhew, that an authoritative power is not only exerciſed in general by the rulers of the church in every party, but is their juſt prerogative from the united evidence of reaſon and ſcripture. It follows naturally, under our ſecond diviſion, to examine who are the perſons that are to be inveſted with this power in a particular congregation, whether the members in general, as ſome Independents explicitly, and all other Independents indirectly affirm, or only a few, denominated elders, to whom, according to the Preſbyterian ſcheme, the exerciſe of government is excluſively committed?

Here, indeed, it is but juſtice to remark, that there is a certain pre-eminence, in point of power, which is granted by Independents to their elders or paſtors. It is their province, they allow, to ſit as preſidents in the meetings of their churches, and preſerve order; to prepare the buſineſs which is to be the ſubject of diſcuſſion for being laid before the members, and ſtate the deciſion which appears to them moſt conſonant to the mind of God; and after the members have finally determined, to announce that determination, and to require ſubmiſſion to it from the various perſons connected with their ſocieties. If a caſe, moreover, occurs, where the number of voters on each ſide of a queſtion happens to be equal, they ſubmit the point to the vote of their elder who preſides at the time. In all other reſpects, however, their power is the ſame with that of even the loweſt members of the church *.

* Some Independents indeed have aſſerted with Glaſs, that as the elders are furniſhed with ſuperior gifts for repreſenting the authority of Chriſt in his word, and with more ſpiritual wiſdom

But to admit the members, in general, of a church to an equality of power with thoſe who are *nominally* inveſted with the rule, appears to be improper for the following reaſons.

In the 1ſt place, Moſt of the members of a church are commonly *unqualified* for the exerciſe of ſuch power; and to ſuppoſe that Jeſus, the King of Zion, has warranted thoſe whom he has not qualified to exerciſe this authority is worſe than contradictory. But that the *greater* part of the members of a church are not ſo qualified, Mr. Ewing, as was remarked, has already acknowledged in the moſt decided terms. He grants that ſuch is the ſtate of the people, that a few of the moſt active ſpirit and readieſt elocution will uſually be able to ſway a congregation; and that ſuch is the collected ignorance of the brethren, and ſuch their collected infirmities and corruption, that it would be extremely dangerous to the cauſe of truth, and of Chriſtian *liberty*, to make every thing that ought to be done, even though trivial and obvious, wait for diſcuſſion in full aſſembly. And this repreſentation unqueſtionably accords with fact. How many are there, in every congregation, who, though undoubtedly attached to the cauſe of Chriſt, and though

to apply it to the conſcience, they are entitled to ſuperior power in the church. But is it not evident, that if their power reſults from *their gifts* and not from their *office*, and is to be proportioned to the degree of them which they are ſuppoſed to poſſeſs, every *member* who is believed to have *equal* qualifications, muſt be entitled alſo to an *equality* of power; and every member who is imagined to have *ſuperior* wiſdom, and whoſe labours as a paſtor are not needed by the church, muſt have a right even to an influence *ſuperior* to that of her elders and *nominal rulers* in all their determinations? Beſides, whatever may be the gifts and endowments of the elders, as their propoſals are ſubjected to the opinion and vote of the members at large, before they can be conſidered as deciſions binding upon the church, all that ſuperiority of power, which in profeſſion and title they attribute to the elders, muſt be completely annihilated.

ſo far acquainted with the doctrines of his goſpel as ſeems neceſſary to ſalvation, are perſons of very feeble powers, and very limited information! Are there not many among them, who, in the language of ſcripture, are *weak*, as well as others who are ſtrong; many who are but *babes and children* in Chriſt, as well as others who are fathers? Nay, it will perhaps be found upon a candid ſurvey, that the *majority* of thoſe who are received as members even in the beſt regulated churches, though they underſtand ſo much of the doctrines of the goſpel as entitles them, if attended by a correſpondent practice, to the privilege of communion, are, in ſome meaſure at leaſt, of this deſcription. The original faculties of many of them are weak: the degree of culture which they have received in youth is comparatively ſcanty: from the attention which is requiſite to their ſecular employments, they can find but little time in their future life for intellectual improvement; and even that little, if they are men of piety, is almoſt entirely devoted to the inſtruction of their families, or the acquiſition of ſuch knowledge as is ſubſervient merely to their perſonal religion. Whatever, in ſhort, may be the attainments of others, are there not many among them, whom, though you could not exclude from the table of the Lord on account of any defect in their piety, you would not intruſt with a very inferior ſhare in the management even of your temporal affairs? Are there not many to be found among them, to whom, though men of the moſt amiable characters, you could not commit even the loweſt offices in the government of the ſtate, or the guardianſhip ſimply of your *external* intereſts, where no extraordinary knowledge or wiſdom was required? Can you ſuppoſe then for a moment, that the King of Zion has conſtituted ſuch perſons the governors of his church? Can you believe that he has appointed every ſuch member, however weak, who has a right, from the evidences of his ſaving know-

ledge, and child-like holineſs, to the ſacrament of the ſupper, to be a judge alſo in the moſt important and difficult matters which regard the deareſt intereſts of his people? Nay, is it poſſible to admit, as muſt evidently be the caſe upon the Independents ſcheme, that though *the majority of the members of a particular congregation* be of this deſcription, he has committed to them the power of judging reſpecting every matter the moſt dubious and momentous that concerns the moſt valuable rights of their brethren; and that this plan is more conducive to the promotion of truth, and the adminiſtration of equal and impartial juſtice, than that which veſts this power in a few of the wiſeſt and moſt enlightened of the members together with the teachers?

It is of importance ſtill farther to be remarked, that ſtrongly as this difficulty appears to militate againſt the ſcheme of Independency in the preſent age, it muſt be much more formidable, if we attend to the church at a more early period, or in a leſs favourable ſituation. If even in our own country, where the means of information have ſo long and ſo plentifully been enjoyed by all, very few are qualified to be eccleſiaſtical rulers, muſt not the number of theſe in the primitive ages, when they had juſt emerged from the ſuperſtition of Judaiſm or the darkneſs of Heatheniſm, and were in ſome meaſure ſhackled by their former prejudices—when the opportunities alſo of general knowledge were much leſs abundant, and when the copies of the ſcriptures, from their ignorance of printing, were both leſs numerous, and few but the paſtors of the church could read them—muſt not the number, I ſay, of thoſe who were qualified to be eccleſiaſtical rulers at that period have been greatly more limited? And if even among ourſelves, ſo few are fitted for this arduous work, ſhould the goſpel be propagated in Pagan countries, as among the Caffres, or inhabitants of O'why'hee or Otaheite, would not the individuals who would be

found, in their different congregations, capable of judging upon every point of doctrine or government, however difficult, be much less numerous? Every Caffre or Hottentot however, upon the Independent scheme, who seemed to have as much knowledge as is necessary for salvation, and was enabled to exhibit a corresponding practice, would be recognized in effect as a ruler of the church; and to the judgment and vote of an assembly of such men, would every proposal of their elders, however superior in knowledge, necessarily be subjected, before they could be adopted and acted upon in their congregations *.

2dly, It seems clearly to be taught in scripture, that the power of ruling, whether by persuasion and advice, or by ministerial authority, is committed to *some* only, and not to all the members of the church indiscriminately. "Salute all them that have the rule over you," says Paul to the Hebrews (Heb. xiii. 24.), "and all the "saints." Now, as we have already proved that the word which is here translated rulers, most probably signifies, not merely presidents or governors by advice and persuasion, but *authoritative rulers*, is it not a natural consequence from the phraseology in this passage, that as the saints are here distinguished from their rulers,

* How would Messrs. Ewing or Little relish the submission of all their measures to the cognizance of *such* a court? Or, if pastors of congregations, like those mentioned by Paul, Heb. v. 12. (and if there were such congregations then, there may be many similar to them now), who, while they might have been teachers, needed to be taught again what were the first principles of the oracles of God; if pastors, I say, of such congregations, would they be willing that every point, however *difficult* and *important*, should be subjected to their judgment, and determined by *their vote?* In Presbytery, however, though there was not one of a congregation fitted to be an elder, to assist the pastor in the government of the church, this want could be supplied by having recourse to the ministers of other churches met as a classical court of review, an expedient which is utterly impracticable to Independents.

every Chriſtian member is not entitled to be *ſuch* a ruler? Or, if it mean ſimply, as Independents allege, perſons who are to govern by advice and perſuaſion, is it not equally plain from it, that every ſaint is not to be *ſuch* a governor*? "God," ſays the ſame Apoſtle (1 Cor. xii. 28.), "hath ſet *ſome* in the church, firſt, "apoſtles; ſecondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after "that miracles; then gifts of healing, helps, *govern-* "*ments.*"—Here it is neceſſary to remark, that in the whole of this context, from the 12th verſe, the Apoſtle is ſpeaking of the church of Chriſt under the emblem of his body, and affirms that in it there is a variety of offices adapted to the comfort and convenience of the whole, as in the natural body there is a variety of members, each of which is neceſſary to its happineſs, and all of which are eſſential to its beauty. This variety of members, in the natural body, he aſſerts to be a proof of the Creator's wiſdom, and contends that it is not only beneficial to the intereſts of the whole, but that ſuch is the dependence of one member upon another, that none of them has a right to look down with contempt upon the leſs honourable members. "For the body is not "one member," ſays he (ver. 14.), "but many. If "the foot ſhall ſay, Becauſe I am not the hand, I am

* Glaſs and other Independents tranſlate the word ἡγεμόνες, which is rendered in our Bibles rulers, *guides*. This however, as was before evinced, is contrary to its uſual acceptation in the New Teſtament, where it generally ſignifies rulers or governors. Beſides, how could this term, upon the principles of Independents, if it ſignifies merely *guides* who had a right only to adviſe, be applied excluſively to the *elders* of the church? As the *members* indiſcriminately, according to them, have a right to adviſe as well as the elders, nay, as the opinion of the former may be adopted occaſionally by the congregation while that of the latter is rejected and ſet aſide, have not the members frequently an equal, if not a ſuperior title to this name, of being guides to their miniſters or elders?

" not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? " And if the ear ſhall ſay, Becauſe I am not the eye, I " am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? " If the whole body were an eye, where were the hear- " ing? if the whole were hearing, where were the ſmell- " ing? But now hath God ſet the members in the body, " as it hath pleaſed him. And if they were all one " member, where were the body? But now are they " many members, yet but one body. And the eye " cannot ſay to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor, " again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you, *&c.*" After which he informs us (ver. 27.), that *believers* are the body of Chriſt; and obſerves, that in this body (ver. 28.) God hath ſet a variety of offices for its edification, as ſtriking, and diſtinct, and neceſſary, as the different members of the natural body. Theſe offices he enumerates, and mentions among them, firſt, " apoſtles;" ſecondarily, " prophets;" thirdly, " teachers;" then " miracles," *i. e.* as is plain from ver. 29. workers of miracles; then " gifts of healing," *i. e.* as is evident from the 30th verſe, perſons who have the gifts of healing; then " helps," *i. e.* perſons who are helps; and then " governments," *i. e.* perſons who are governors. Now, as he himſelf remarks, in ſtating this compariſon (ver. 17, 18.), that *every* member of the natural body is not an eye, nor an ear, nor endowed by its Creator with the ſenſe of ſmelling, is it not equally inconteſtable that when he alſo tells us, that in the church of Chriſt, which is his body, there is a diverſity of offices no leſs ſtriking, and that God hath ſet in it only *ſome* governments or governors, *every* member of that church cannot be entitled to the privilege of being a governor, whether this governor is to rule, as Independents ſay, by advice and perſuaſion, or, as Preſbyterians contend, by the exerciſe of authoritative though ſubordinate power? On the whole, is it not manifeſt, that if the Apoſtle denies in

the 29th verſe, that *all* were to be apoſtles, becauſe he had ſaid in the 28th verſe, that only *ſome* were to be apoſtles; and that *all* were to be prophets, becauſe God hath ſet in the church only *ſome* to be prophets; and that *all* were to be teachers, becauſe he had ſaid before that only *ſome* were to be teachers; is it not alſo manifeſt upon the very ſame principle, that as he had ſaid before too, that God had ſet in the church only *ſome* governments or governors, *all* who are members of Chriſt's ſpiritual body are not to be admitted to be *governors* in his church, whatever may be the nature and degree of that power which theſe governors ſhould exerciſe?

Is it affirmed, in anſwer to this, according to the ideas of ſome Independents, that the Apoſtle, when ſpeaking here of governments, intends not an *office*, but ſimply a gift or qualification for government, and that no argument of courſe, for excluding the members of the church in general from being eccleſiaſtical rulers, can be deduced from its being ſaid, that "God hath ſet in "the church only ſome governments?" We reply, that the argument againſt this firſt principle of Independency ſeems equally concluſive, whether the Apoſtle is ſpeaking of an office, or of a gift; for, if he intends not an office, but merely a gift, will it not equally follow upon their mode of reaſoning, that ſince thoſe alone are to rule in the church on whom God has beſtowed qualifications or gifts for government, and ſince, by their own confeſſion, it is here declared that he has beſtowed theſe gifts only upon *ſome*, *all* cannot be entitled to be rulers in his church? Beſides, that the Apoſtle is here ſpeaking of an office, and not ſimply of endowments, appears, among other things, from the original word here tranſlated "ſet" or "conſtituted" in the church, which always, in ſuch a connection as this, when the caſe admits it, denotes the appointment of perſons to an office. It is ſo underſtood in this very paſſage, when it is ſaid, that God hath

fet in the church, ſome apoſtles, and ſome prophets, and ſome teachers; and ſince by governments, as was before attempted to be proved, is here intended governors, there appears to be no reaſon for underſtanding it in a different ſenſe when applied to *them*. It is the ſame word too which is uſed (Acts xx. 28.) to expreſs the appointment of the Epheſian elders, and not merely their *gifts*, to the official overſight of that Chriſtian church: "Take heed "therefore unto yourſelves, and to all the flock, over the "which the Holy Ghoſt hath *made*" (ἔθετο), or *ſet*, or *appointed* "you overſeers:" and is the very word which is employed (2 Tim. i. 11.) to denote the appointment of the Apoſtle Paul to his office: "Whereunto I am "appointed (ἐτέθην) a preacher, and an apoſtle, and a teacher of the Gentiles." Is it contended, moreover *, that even allowing that an office is here intended by governments, it is deacons who are referred to? To this it is anſwered, that the Apoſtle ſeems already to have mentioned theſe under the name of helps; and that, at any rate, it is not the province of deacons, *as ſuch*, to govern, but merely to ſerve tables, a meaning undoubtedly too limited and inadequate for the ſtrong word which is here uſed by the Apoſtle to ſignify governments. Or is it alleged †, that admitting the word to ſignify properly eccleſiaſtical rulers, what is here intended by it may have now ceaſed, as well as workers of miracles, perſons endowed with the gift of healing and of tongues, and apoſtles and prophets, who are mentioned along with them? To this it is anſwered, that even upon the principles of Independents themſelves, while miracles have ceaſed, and tongues and prophecies have failed, government will for ever continue in the church: and that if we are to infer, from its being here joined with the gifts of miracles and tongues, that it muſt now be laid aſide,

* See Chandler on Joel, p. 150.

† See Dr. Iſaac Watts on the Chriſtian Church, p. 73.

we contend that it must be laid aside by Independents as well as by Presbyterians; and upon the same principle it may be proved, that since *teachers* also are here mentioned along with them, the office of a teacher should no longer be continued in the church of Christ.

Upon a review then of the Apostle's reasoning in the whole of this passage, I feel disposed to conclude that *all* are no more now entitled to be rulers, than they were entitled formerly to be apostles or prophets, or pastors and teachers; and that, in Christ's spiritual body, all are no more authorized to be governors, as they are obviously warranted upon the Independent plan, than, in the natural body, each of the members is to be an eye, or an ear, or a sense of smelling. This reasoning, I apprehend, is no less conclusive against admitting them to rule, even upon *the scheme of Independents*, by *advice* and *persuasion*, than, upon the scheme of Presbyterians, by the exercise of limited subordinate authority.

In the 3d place, The terms employed in scripture to express the various characters and relations of members and their elders, seem also to intimate that every Christian is not warranted to claim an equal share of ecclesiastical government. While the rulers, as has been observed, are distinguished in the New Testament by the strongest titles expressive of the office and authority of *governors*, the members, as has been said, are pointed out at the same time as *governed* by them, and are enjoined to obey them. But if every Christian among those who are governed (the point of presiding as moderator in their assemblies, and announcing the decision, alone excepted) be as much a governor as the governors themselves, how can the distinction which we have mentioned be preserved? Must not *all* be *governors*, and *all* be *governed?* and must not the kingdom of Jesus be distinguished by a circumstance not only peculiar to itself, but which would be considered as impolitic and contra-

dictory in every wife and well-regulated human government; namely, that all its *fubjects* fhould not only be fubjects, but *rulers*, and as much, or rather *more* entitled, on account of their number, to the character of rulers than the governors themfelves? While the former, too, are affirmed (Acts xx. 28.) to be authoritative overfeers of the church, as the captains of hundreds and thoufands were of their men *, and as the rulers of cities were of the inhabitants of thefe cities †, the members of the church are faid to be officially overfeen by them in *government* as well as in doctrine. But if every member, as Independents affert, be not only as much an overfeer of the church at large as the overfeers themfelves, but, as was before evinced, from their fuperior number, poffeffed of a far greater fhare of the overfight—nay, if, as was alfo noticed, they can completely overturn the propofals of the overfeers, and dictate to them what *they* are to receive and obey, is not the diftinction which we have ftated completely deftroyed? and are not *all* not only *overfeers* as well as *overfeen*, but are not the very men who are appointed to be *overfeen*, *more worthy* of being dignified with this honourable name, than the men who are *officially characterized* by it? While the former are defcribed as the *flock*, the latter are repreferted in fcripture as the *paftors*, a name often beftowed upon authoritative civil rulers and officers ‡, and are enjoined to per-

* See the paffages produced, Letter II. where this very word is applied to them.

† See 1 Maccab. chap. i. where this fame term is fo ufed; Και εποιησεν επισκοπους επι παντα τον λαον, "And made them "overfeers of the whole people."

‡ See Ifaiah xliv. 28. where it is given to Cyrus, king of Perfia; 2 Sam. v. 2. where it is beftowed upon David, becaufe, as a military officer under Saul, he had led out and brought in Ifrael; and to the judges of Ifrael, 1 Chron. xvii. 6. whom God is there faid to have commanded to *feed* or govern his people. See alfo Homer's Iliad *paffim*, where the common name for Agamemnon,

form the part of paſtors to the church of God; *i. e.* not only to feed them with wholeſome doctrine, but alſo to govern them as a ſhepherd does his flock *. But if each of the flock, as muſt be the caſe upon the Independent plan, is to govern not only the other members of the flock, but even the *paſtors* themſelves, as much as *they* are to govern the members, how can this difference of character be maintained? Is not every ſheep in the flock of Chriſt, according to this ſcheme, not only a *ſheep*, but a *paſtor*? nay, are they not *better* entitled, upon the principles of Independents, as already mentioned, to the name of paſtors, than thoſe who are in ſcripture diſtinguiſhed by that appellation? Since, then, it ſeems impoſſible to allow the members of the church in general the power of ruling, without making them at once *all governors* as well as *all governed*, *all overſeers* as well as *all overſeen*, and *all paſtors* as well as *all ſheep*; nay, ſince, from their ſuperior number, which is often twenty or a hundred times greater than that of the miniſters, it would make them *more really* governors, and overſeers, and paſtors, than the governors, and overſeers, and paſtors themſelves; the plan of Independency, which is attended with ſuch conſequences, muſt certainly be inadmiſſible, and we are bound to conclude that believers in general are not to govern in the church of God.

the leader and commander of the Grecian hoſt, is ποιμην λαων, ſhepherd of the people.

* Compare Matth. ii. 6. where the very word which is employed in Acts xx. 28. to ſignify the paſtoral overſight of the elders at Epheſus over their members, is uſed to denote the paſtoral conduct of Jeſus, not only as teaching but *ruling* his people. "Out of thee," ſays that Evangeliſt reſpecting the Saviour, "ſhall come a Governor "that ſhall rule, ποιμανει, ſhall *govern as a ſhepherd* my people "Iſrael." Conſult, likewiſe, Rev. ii. 27. xii. 5. and xix. 15. where the ſame word which is uſed to expreſs what the elders at Epheſus were authorized to perform as the ſhepherds or paſtors of the flock, ſignifies to *rule*, as in other places it means to feed by inſtruction.

It is not enough to tell us, that, at leaſt upon *your* plan of adminiſtration, the members of the church are not conſidered as *rulers* when they expreſs their ſentiments upon any queſtion, but are ſimply aſked, for the ſatisfaction of the elders, by whom any meaſure is propoſed, to deliver their opinion, and ſtate their vote. Nor is it enough to ſay, that they do not receive the *appellation* of *rulers*, if, in their capacity of church-members, they actually poſſeſs and exerciſe an authority at leaſt equal, if not ſuperior to that of the rulers themſelves. That ſuch authority is poſſeſſed by them, appears to be incontrovertible. Is not the judgment of the members, as Mr. Ewing informs us (p. 36.), to be taken in *every* queſtion, if a matter of importance, and are not all of them indiſcriminately admitted to vote? You yourſelf too declare (p. 30.), that "*nothing* is to "be done without *the conſent* of the members." Mr. Little, alſo, in his Letter to Mr. Donald, one of the members excommunicated from the church in Perth, tells him, "that *the church* were *to conſider* his caſe, and that "of the other members who were excommunicated with "him." (See his Letter, as inſerted at large in the Narrative before mentioned.) And when that caſe was conſidered, it is aſſerted by theſe perſons who were thus excluded, and not denied by Mr. Little, that the roll containing the names of the members of the church was called, and their votes marked, before the deed of the elders was viewed as ratified. Does not the adoption or rejection of any meaſure depend entirely upon a *majority of them?* and if ſuch a majority are pleaſed to ſet aſide any propoſal of the elders or *nominal* rulers, will it not be ſet aſide? and if they are diſpoſed to vote for an oppoſite opinion, will it not be carried in oppoſition to their rulers; and be binding upon their rulers, as much as upon any of the members, if they remain in their ſociety? This, I believe, cannot be denied. I contend

therefore, that even upon *your* plan of Independency, as well as in every other which grants a power of deliberating and voting to your members at large, though you deny them the name and title of rulers, and allow them only, as you expreſs it, a power of conſent, they enjoy not only *as much*, but *more* of the *real* authority of rulers, than thoſe to whom, according to the words of your brother, the government of your churches is committed *nominally*; and conſequently, that *your* ſcheme in particular, as well as that of Independents in general, ſeems juſtly chargeable with the inconſiſtencies which have been mentioned, or may yet be charged upon it, from the word of God.

4thly, Terms are uſed in ſcripture expreſſive of the duties of Chriſtian members to their eccleſiaſtical rulers, which appear no leſs clearly to intimate that Chriſtians in general are not to be governors in the church of God. They are required, for inſtance (1 Theſſ. v. 13.), to *know* their rulers, or thoſe who are *over them* in the Lord; *i. e.* to *acknowledge* them as ſuch. Now, as the word here rendered thoſe who were *over them* in the Lord, as has been already remarked, means not merely thoſe who preſided in their aſſemblies, but authoritative rulers, who had a right to deliver deciſions in the name of Chriſt and demand their obedience, I cannot ſee how this duty could be enjoined upon the members in general, if all of them in *reality*, though not in name, were as much governors as their rulers or preſbyters. *Every Chriſtian member*, upon the Independent ſcheme, being as much a ruler as any of the elders, would require to be acknowledged *as ſuch equally* with them; nay, the majority of the rulers, on this plan, being members, and of courſe their influence being *greater*, it appears *as fit*, and perhaps *more conſiſtent*, that the elders ſhould be called to acknowledge *them* as rulers, than that they ſhould be enjoined to acknowledge the elders. Not only are the members

commanded in general to acknowledge their rulers as ſuch, but to *eſteem them very highly* in love for their work's ſake, in ruling, if they barely ruled; as well as in preaching, if they alſo preached. The original words, which denote the degree of eſteem that is due to them, are moſt uncommonly expreſſive, ὑπερ ἐκπερισσοῦ; *i. e.* literally rendered, "*above the greateſt abundance*, or "*exceeding exceeding highly*." But how could Chriſtians in general be required to render to their elders *ſuch an extraordinary reſpect*, if all that diſtinguiſhed them from common members were merely that they were to be preſidents in the aſſemblies of the church, while an equal ſhare of rule belongs to every member in particular; nay, while it is certain that, as the judgment and votes of the members in every queſtion are to fix the deciſion, the power of government is *chiefly* in them? Are not *the members*, at leaſt as far as government is concerned, upon the Independent plan, *better* entitled to this *exceedingly exceedingly high* eſteem, for the effects of good government, than *the elders themſelves?* Farther, Chriſtians are ordered (1 Tim. v. 17.) to reckon the elders who rule well, *on account of their ruling*, worthy even of *double honour*, and to give them that *honour*. But if every member is to be a ruler of the church, as well as the elders, will it not follow from this, that if *any* of the *members* rule well, double honour ſhould be granted to them as well as to the elders; and if *all the members* rule well, will it not equally follow, that *all the members* ſhould give to *all the members* double honour, becauſe they rule well? To talk however of all the members of a church giving to all the members, if they ruled well, double honour, is evidently abſurd. And to conſider the Apoſtle as requiring *honour* from the members of the church to the elders, when, by this ſcheme, they have an equal, if not a ſuperior ſhare of eccleſiaſtic power to

these very elders, seems a palpable contradiction. *Honour* can be rendered only by an inferior to a superior, and *double honour* can be given only by one who is very inferior to one who is greatly superior. But in an Independent congregation, which admits every member to an equal share in the government, no such inferiority can exist. Or, if the word here translated *honour*, signifies not only *honour*, but maintenance, as Guyse and other Independents have maintained; and if it be asserted from this passage, that the elders who rule well, are entitled, if they need it, to *double maintenance;* it will also follow, that if every member is to be an ecclesiastical ruler, *he* would be entitled also, if he ruled well, to *double maintenance*. This, however, is no less absurd; for where could the church be found, whose funds would admit of such an expenditure? In fine, Christians are commanded, as was remarked, to *obey* their rulers (Heb. xiii. 17.); *i. e.* not merely to be subject to them as one Christian is to another, but to render an obedience such as inferiors do to superiors. But if, according to the principles of Independency, every member is to have an equal voice in every determination with those who are elders, and if he is in reality a ruler, whatever he may be in name, as well as they; who are the persons that are to perform this command?

If those only who are distinct from the rulers can obey them, then, according to your plan, none can comply with this apostolic injunction, because *all* are rulers; and consequently we are reduced to this absurd supposition, that the Apostle commands the rulers to obey themselves. This manifest absurdity is equally supposed, whatever be the kind of obedience that is enjoined, whether it be compliance with persuasion, or submission to authority. As it therefore appears impossible to explain these exhortations consistently, if every member has in reality,

though perhaps not in name, an equal title with elders to rule the church, the principle which such contradictions suppose, must be rejected; and, by consequence, it must still be affirmed that every individual Christian has not a right to be a ruler in the church of God.

LETTER IV.

SIR,

IN addition to the arguments which have already been urged in refutation of your scheme, there are others, from which its contrariety to the sacred oracles is no less apparent. I therefore observe in the

5th place, That the keys, which are the emblem of subordinate authority in the kingdom of Jesus, are represented in scripture as delivered by him to the ministers, and not to the members.

With regard to the import of the celebrated passage in Matth. xvi. where Jesus is said to have bestowed upon Peter these keys of his kingdom, much diversity of sentiment has obtained. Papists contend that it includes a grant of universal supremacy over the church on earth to Peter, as the representative of the Saviour, which grant they suppose to be transferred to their popes, who, according to them, are the successors of this Apostle. But even though they could prove that their popes were the legitimate successors of Peter (in proving which they have as yet uniformly failed), this passage contains no such grant to them; for, in other places, the rest of the Apostles are pointed out as invested with an equality of power, and as even withstanding him to the face on a particular occasion, because he was to be blamed. Episcopalians allege that he represented their bishops, to whom, upon their scheme, the government of the church is chiefly

committed. But it is plain that no such bishops as theirs are authorized by scripture, which points out to us a *plurality* of bishops or overseers in many primitive churches (see Philip. i. 1. Acts xx. 17. 28, &c.); and informs us at the same time, that by these we are to understand elders or ministers, who preached and ruled (see also for this, Acts xx. 1 Peter v. 1, 2, 3. &c.). Independents assert, that here Peter represents believers in general, to whom, according to them, the government of the church of Jesus is intrusted. The reasons on which they build this interpretation are these: That the gift of the keys was conferred on Peter, upon his confessing Jesus to be the Son of God; and, consequently, should be conferred on all who make this confession: and the name Peter or Rock, which was given to this Apostle upon this occasion, belongs, they say, equally to all believers, who are, no less than he, spiritual stones, built upon the same holy and blessed foundation. It seems probable however, that the name Peter, or the Rock, as bestowed upon this Apostle, is not the same with that which is elsewhere given to believers in general, when they are denominated Stones, and living Stones *; nor does it follow that because they possess, in common with him, *one* part of the honour which he is here declared to have received, they are entitled to the other also. The *gift of the keys* is undoubtedly very different from that of being *a stone built up by God's Spirit on the true foundation*, and the enjoyment of the one can never necessarily imply the possession of the other. Besides, though it should be conceded, that the grant of the keys was made to Peter because he confessed Christ to be the Son of God, it cannot be inferred, on any consistent principle, that *every one* who confesses him is to receive that honour. We know that this Apostle,

* See Whitby on the place.

on another memorable occaſion (ſee John xxi.), when he not only profeſſed his faith, but his love to the Saviour, was anew authorized by him to be a preacher and an Apoſtle *; but there are few, I believe, who, from this circumſtance, would conclude with a celebrated miniſter, "that *every* man (however weak) who can lay "his hand on his heart, and ſay he *loves* Chriſt, has "Chriſt's call and warrant to preach the goſpel." But if few would adduce this as a proof that all who are poſſeſſed of a ſimilar affection ſhould have the office of a *miniſter*, on what principle can it be demonſtrated, that, though Peter was inveſted by Jeſus with the office of a *ruler* on his confeſſing his *faith*, all who are poſſeſſed of *ſimilar faith* ſhould have a *ſimilar function?* Nor will the nature of the deed itſelf authorize it; for by confeſſing Jeſus, and by being built up on him as a living ſtone, a perſon becomes merely a member of his family, and a ſubject of his kingdom. But is it a legitimate inference, that becauſe a perſon becomes a *ſubject* of his kingdom, and a *member* of his houſe, he is advanced in conſequence of it to the office of a *ſteward*, to whoſe power, as expreſſed by the uſual badge which he anciently wore (a golden key carried on his ſhoulder), there is an evident alluſion in the phraſeology before us? Were this the caſe, it would be a natural conſequence that every perſon who becomes a believer, and a living ſtone, would be conſtituted alſo a *ſteward* in the houſe of God, to rule and govern it; and in the family of Chriſt, all would be *ſtewards*, as well as *governed*. But if *all* were *ſtewards*, where were thoſe who ſhould be *governed* by them? Though therefore Peter, on this *remarkable occaſion*, when a clearer diſcovery was to be made by Jeſus of his character and kingdom than hitherto was done, received from him the aſſurance that he had committed to him

* "Feed my ſheep; feed my lambs."

the keys of his kingdom, and advanced him to the honour of being a ruler in it, it will not follow that *every Chriſtian*, who believes and confeſſes him on *every* occaſion, is to receive that dignity. Does it follow that if a prince, at *a particular time*, to teſtify his approbation of the views entertained of his character and government by one of his ſubjects, advances him to ſpecial honour, *every one* of his ſubjects who expreſſes ſimilar views, at *every future period*, and on *every occaſion*, ſhould attain a ſimilar honour? Neither, therefore, of the arguments which have been urged, evince that Peter repreſented believers in general, when he received at this time the keys of the kingdom; and the obvious meaning of the expreſſions employed to denote this truſt, which plainly refer to the office of a ſteward, ſeems totally incompatible with this idea.

It is indeed ſaid (Matth. xviii.), that "whatſoever *the* "*church* binds on earth," agreeably to the will of Jeſus, "ſhall be bound in heaven; and that whatſoever they "looſe on earth, ſhall be looſed in heaven;" which is the ſame language that accompanies the gift of the keys to Peter (chap. xvi.): but, I truſt, it will afterwards appear that we are not here to underſtand, by the term church, every particular member. On the contrary, we know that language almoſt exactly ſimilar is employed by our Saviour, to expreſs the power which he gave to his *miniſters*, and his *miniſters* alone in their official capacity. John xx. 21. 23. "Then ſaid Jeſus unto them "again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath ſent me, "even ſo ſend I you. Whoſe ſoever ſins ye remit, they "are remitted unto them; and whoſe ſoever ſins ye retain, "they are retained." To ſet aſide this remark it is not ſufficient to tell us with ſome Independents*, "that, "perhaps, this forgiving of ſin was equivalent to *healing*

* See Watt's Plain Proof, p. 171.

" *diſeaſes*, as we know that the Apoſtles had the power " of healing diſeaſes conferred on them, and as our " Lord declares it to be a proof of authority to forgive " ſin on earth:" Matth. ix. 6. The power of healing diſeaſes is never, as far as we recollect, repreſented in ſcripture as equivalent to that of forgiving iniquity; and the Apoſtles, in exerciſing the former, are never ſaid to have performed the latter. Nay, even in the paſſage referred to, when our Saviour is aſſerted to have *healed diſeaſes*, this is by no means pointed out as *the ſame* with his *forgiving ſin*, but ſimply as an *atteſtation of the truth* of what he ſaid, when he declared that he was commiſſioned by his heavenly Father to remit ſins on earth. But will it follow that becauſe this was produced as *an evidence* of the truth of his declaration that he was commiſſioned to forgive ſins, it was *equivalent* to the actual diſpenſation of that forgiveneſs? Though the miracles of the converſion of water into wine, of the multiplication of the loaves, of the reſtoration of ſight and hearing to the blind and deaf, and many ſimilar works, when performed by our Lord, are adduced as *evidences* that he was, what he profeſſed, the only Saviour, will it follow that theſe miracles were equivalent to this *ſalvation* which he came to beſtow? It ſeems plain that the power of remitting and retaining ſins, mentioned in John, is the ſame with what is expreſſed in Matth. xviii. 18. and xvi. 19. by *binding* an offending, and *looſing* a penitent brother, agreeably to a common metaphor in ſcripture, by which men, when, like Simon Magus, under the guilt and the power of ſin, are repreſented as fixed in a bond; and when delivered from theſe, as looſed or ſet free *. Now, this binding or looſing certainly does not mean

* See alſo Prov. v. 22. " His own iniquities ſhall take the " wicked himſelf, and he ſhall be holden with the cords of his " ſins," *&c.*

the performance of a miracle for the *cure of the body* of a penitent brother, or a refusal to exert that power upon one who is obstinate, or *the infliction of disease* upon one who has transgressed; for, in that case, it would follow from Matth. xviii. that the impenitent brother, whose case we are called to tell to the church, must be one who is already *diseased*, or upon whom, if he obstinately persist in his sin, *disease* is to be inflicted, and then too, since this miraculous power has ceased, the power of jurisdiction, or of binding and loosing, must have *ceased along with it*. But as none of these consequences can safely be admitted, it seems manifest that the remitting and retaining of sins mentioned in John, and the binding and loosing spoken of in Matthew, must denote the exercise only of an ordinary, and not of a miraculous power. And farther, as it appears to denote not an extraordinary but an ordinary power, consisting in that subordinate judicial authority to pardon or condemn, which those only who have the keys of the kingdom committed to them are authorized to exercise, it is equally evident that it can be vested in the ministers only, not in the private members of the church. It is never said to be intrusted to the latter, though it is expressly affirmed (John xx.) to be given to the former; and in receiving this authority they are plainly pointed out under the character of stewards, which is altogether inconsistent with the supposition that the keys are committed to the members at large, or that they are associated with their pastors in administering the affairs of the church of Christ.

To invalidate the argument for the right of the elders exclusively to govern in the Christian church, which is derived from this passage, many other criticisms have been advanced by Independents. Some have supposed that by the keys of the kingdom which were given to Peter, we are to understand only the key of knowledge,

and the honour of firſt preaching the truths of the goſpel to the Jews and Gentiles.

In ſupport of this they inform us, that there is an evident alluſion to the cuſtom of the Jews, who delivered to their Rabbis a key, when inveſted with that dignity. This, however, is very far from amounting to the binding and looſing the guilty on earth, as they were *bound and looſed in heaven*, which is here affirmed to be connected with theſe keys, and which undoubtedly muſt be an exerciſe of government. And we know that when the ſteward of the houſe of David, whoſe kingdom was certainly a type of that of Chriſt, had a key delivered to him, it implied his being intruſted, under the king, with the affairs of the kingdom. "It ſhall come to paſs in that "day," ſays Iſaiah (chap. xxii. 20.), "that I will call "my ſervant Eliakim, the ſon of Hilkiah: and I will "clothe him with thy robe, and ſtrengthen him with thy "girdle, and I will commit *thy government into his hand*, "(that of Shebna, who was over the houſe, ver. 15.). "And the key of the houſe of David will I lay upon his "ſhoulder: he ſhall open, and none ſhall ſhut; and he "ſhall ſhut, and none ſhall open." And we ſee likewiſe the ſame emblem when applied to our Lord (who tells us, that he ſent his Apoſtles *as* his Father had ſent him, and gave them of the glory which his Father had given him), employed to denote authority. "And to the angel of "the church in Philadelphia," ſays John (Rev. iii. 7.), "write, Theſe things ſaith he that is holy, he that is "true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, "and no man ſhutteth, and ſhutteth, and no man "openeth." Now, as in theſe other circumſtances, it inconteſtably includes the power of government, whatever other idea it may ſuggeſt; and as in the paſſage before us, it is repreſented as exerciſed alſo in relation to a *kingdom*, and is connected with the other expreſſive

phraſes before ſpecified; ought it not likewiſe to be ſo underſtood in the preſent inſtance?

Accordingly, one of our moſt reſpectable Engliſh Independents, in his illuſtration of various paſſages of ſcripture from Oriental cuſtoms, gives the ſame interpretation of this alluſion. "As ſtewards of a great "family," ſays he, "eſpecially of the royal houſehold, "bore a key, probably a golden one, in token of their "office, the phraſe of giving a perſon the key, naturally "grew into an expreſſion of raiſing him to great power "(compare Iſaiah xxii. 22. with Rev. iii. 7.). This was "with peculiar propriety applicable to the ſtewards of "the myſteries of God: 1 Cor. iv. 1. Peter's opening the "kingdom of heaven, as being the firſt that preached "it both to the Jews and to the Gentiles, may be con-"ſidered as an illuſtration of this promiſe; but it is "more fully explained, by the power of binding and "looſing afterwards mentioned *." As to the diſtinction of the keys into thoſe of knowledge, of liberty, and of authority, by which other Independents endeavour to evade this argument, it is altogether fanciful, and not authorized by the word of God. See the London Miniſters Divine Right of Preſbytery, laſt edition, p. 98. 99.

Selden and Lightfoot, with ſome moderns, underſtand by the binding and looſing, a power merely of declaring the doctrines and laws of the goſpel, and not of puniſhing or abſolving in a judicial capacity (ſee M'Knight on the place); and tell us, that theſe terms were uſed by the Rabbis, to ſignify the *lawfulneſs* or *unlawfulneſs* of things. Binding, according to them, denoted that a thing was bound up, or forbidden to men; and looſing, that it was free, or permitted—and why not ſo here? To this, however, it may be replied, that Independents themſelves, *in general*, do not allow to their members the

* Burder's Oriental Cuſtoms, Matth. xvi. 19.

power of binding and loosing in *this* sense; for it is not the privilege of the members, as such, to preach the laws and doctrines of the gospel. We know, besides, that the phrases of binding and loosing were very commonly employed by the Jewish Doctors, to signify not only a *doctrinal* declaration of what was lawful or unlawful, but a *judicial* punishing or absolving of the excommunicated *. The Greeks also had a similar expression relating to judicial authority. Thus Stephens quotes from Æschines these words, Επειδαν τη πρωτη ψηφῳ μη ΛΥΘΗ το παρανομον; *i. e.* "as the person accused was not acquitted," or, agreeably to the translation of the word in Matthew, "was not *loosed* by the first vote." So also, when it is said of Jerusalem (Isaiah xl. 2.), that "her iniquity is "pardoned" (a case exactly in point to Matth. xviii. 18. where the binding and loosing relate to an *offence*), the Septuagint renders the words ΛΕΛΥΤΑΙ αυτης η αμαρτια, "her iniquity is *loosed* †." The Latins, in like manner, employed the same terms, to express acquittal or condemnation by judges in the civil courts, as will be evident to any one who consults the writings of Cicero, whose common phrase for acquittal is "*solvere crimine*, to loose "from a crime or accusation." In short, not only do the terms binding and loosing signify, in sacred and profane authors, judicially to punish, and pardon, and acquit, but it seems evident that in this sense they ought to be understood in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew. There, as was remarked, it is an *offence* that is said to be

* See Buxtorf's Lexicon, Chald. Talmud. Rabbin. p. 1410.

† Thus, likewise (Ecclesiasticus xxviii. 2.), says the son of Sirach, who was a Jew, "Forgive thy neighbour the hurt that "he hath done thee, so shall thy sins be forgiven thee also when "thou prayest;" literally, "shall be loosed to thee," λυθησονται. And thus, too, the Septuagint, speaking of God's forgiving the sin of Job's friends (Job xlii. 9.), says, that he *loosed* their sin, Ελυσε την αμαρτιαν αυτοις.

bound or loosed; and lest the brother who commits it should be disposed to disregard the church when they exert this power, it is declared that what is thus done on earth according to the will of the Saviour, shall be done in heaven also. But this binding or loosing of an *offence*, surely, cannot so properly mean, the declaring it to be or not to be an offence, or denouncing the judgments annexed to it (though this may be included), as, agreeably to the common acceptation of the phrase, the pronouncing the pardon, or the punishment—the acquittal, or the guilt of the offender. Besides, this binding or loosing cannot apply to the preaching of the gospel, or the declaration of its laws; for it is a sentence in which two or three at least must be agreed—which is to be employed only after a private remonstrance and admonition, before two or three Christian brethren, has been tried without effect, and—which must be justified by the testimony of witnesses who have heard the offender vindicate his offence, before it is to be pronounced by the church. It is difficult, however, to perceive on what principle it could be necessary *to call witnesses* before the gospel was preached, or the laws of its kingdom were announced; though this was absolutely essential, if *an act of judicial power* was to be exercised. To this *power* all the circumstances mentioned in the passage easily apply: we therefore conclude, that it sanctions the exercise of judicial authority.

Nor let it be objected with M'Knight, that these expressions are not susceptible of this meaning, because it is not said, *whomsoever*, but *whatsoever* ye shall bind or loose; for it has been already shewn, that they are applied in the Old Testament not only to persons but to things, where it is certain that punishing, or pardoning, was intended. Thus, when it is said of Jerusalem (Isaiah xlii. 2.), that her *iniquity* was to be *loosed*—of Job's friends (Job xlii. 9.), that their *sins* were *loosed* to them—and of those who forgive their neighbours (Eccles. xxviii. 2.),

that their *ſins* ſhould be *looſed*—*things* only are ſpoken of; and it is not merely a declaration that they were lawful or unlawful, but a judicial releaſe from the puniſhment of tranſgreſſion.

From this induction it would therefore appear, that the binding and looſing mentioned, repreſent the exerciſe of authoritative judicial power; and, of conſequence, that as this power has already been proved to be committed, together with the keys of the kingdom, to the miniſters, and not to the members, the former, as diſtinguiſhed from the latter, are the only perſons entitled to the exerciſe of this authority.

LETTER V.

SIR,

AS it appears that the various titles characteriſtic of rulers are given to the elders excluſively, ſo *the higheſt acts of government and diſcipline* ſeem to be repreſented in ſcripture as performed by them, and by them alone. This I ſhall now endeavour to prove, and then conclude this part of the diſcuſſion.

Of the various acts which ought to be conſidered as of the greateſt importance in eccleſiaſtical government, the firſt unqueſtionably which merits our attention is that of the *admiſſion* of *members*.

It ſeems manifeſt from the ſacred oracles, that this work is committed excluſively to the paſtors of the church, and not to them merely as conjoined with the members. At the effuſion on Pentecoſt, for inſtance, we are told, that in what remained of *a ſingle day*, *after* a ſermon from the Apoſtles, about *three thouſand* ſouls were added to the church. But how was it poſſible that in ſo ſhort a ſpace the members at large could meet with the paſtors, and

hear them examined, and expreſs in order their approbation or diſapprobation of the confeſſion and character of every individual in ſuch a multitude? When Philip went down to Samaria, and baptized many, both men and women, and when he baptized and received the Ethiopian eunuch as a member of the church, as well as when Ananias baptized Paul, though in the city of Damaſcus where there was a Chriſtian church, it is plain that this act was performed ſolely by miniſters, without convening or conſulting members. While however, in theſe and other inſtances, both where a church was forming, and, as in the example at Jeruſalem, where it was already formed, the power of admiſſion is repreſented as committed to the miniſters alone, as far as we recollect there is not a ſingle inſtance in the whole of the New Teſtament, where perſons were received into the fellowſhip of the church after the judgment of members had been aſked and obtained. It is indeed ſaid (Acts ix. 26.), that "when Saul, after his converſion, came up to Jeruſalem, "and aſſayed to joined himſelf to the diſciples, they "were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a "diſciple." But here there is no intimation of any meeting of the members together with the paſtors, to conſider the propriety of receiving him as a diſciple. All that is ſtated is ſimply this—that all of them, both Apoſtles and members, were afraid that he was not, as he profeſſed, a diſciple in reality, but intended to deceive them; and conſequently, that as ſo general a fear of him was entertained by the church, he could not be received *by thoſe* whoſe prerogative it was to admit him. Accordingly, we are informed that when he was at laſt received, it was in conſequence of his "being taken and introduced "by Barnabas *to the Apoſtles*," and of *their* being ſatisfied with the account of his converſion and ſincerity which was delivered to them by that Chriſtian miniſter, ver. 27.

Is it objected, that though it may be proved from these examples that ministers may *baptize* without consulting the church, they cannot admit to any other ordinance, or communicate to applicants the *full* privileges of members, without soliciting and obtaining their approbation? I answer by demanding in the first place, whether *all* Independents allow their pastors to receive adults to baptism without consulting their churches? whether, in the next place, it can be proved from the word of God that *adults*, when baptized, are not entitled to every other Christian privilege? and whether the three thousand who were baptized at Pentecost are not declared to have been added to the church as members (Acts ii. 41.), while it is evident that there was not sufficient time for calling the members, and interrogating in their presence each of these converts, and requesting their judgment on the propriety of admitting them? Is it contended, that this scheme is adverse to the principle of Christian liberty, as it enables the pastors to impose whom they please on the communion of the church? It is replied, that it is unjust to affirm that any pastor of a Presbyterian church is warranted by Presbytery to exercise such a power. Certain qualifications are required in the standards of his church before any person can be received into fellowship, and till he obtains satisfactory evidence that those who apply to him have these qualifications, he cannot lawfully receive them *. If, through mistake, an improper person be occasionally admitted, the members are permitted to communicate what they know of the applicant to the pastors; and if, after remonstrance, he be continued in communion, the lowest individual in the congre-

* Since writing the above, I have looked into Pardovan, book ii. title iv. sect. iv. and find, that by *the constitution* of Presbyterian churches, no minister, though he may examine, can admit any person to the privilege of membership, till the whole of his Session, as well as himself, are satisfied both as to his knowledge and piety.

gation is allowed to call these pastors to an account, with the whole of their Session, before a superior court; and if that court should decide amiss, to summon even *it*, with these pastors and elders, to a still higher tribunal; and even *that*, to a higher, till the obnoxious member be at last excluded. Among Independents however, with all their boasted liberty and purity of principle, this is impossible: for if an unworthy applicant be received as a member by a majority of any of their churches, there is no superior court, on earth at least, before whom a conscientious minority can arraign them, and procure the expulsion of that member from their society; however unfit, he must continue in fellowship, while no alternative is left to them but immediate separation, or patient submission amidst obvious corruption. Nor will their separation terminate here; for if the same inconsistency shall be manifested by the majority of the other congregation to whom they may attach themselves, from their want of any court superior to that congregation, they must again separate and join a third, and so on, in a continued course of change and separation, till, like some individuals of them, they be excluded from the fellowship of every church upon earth. In fine, if Independents object to the principles of Presbyterians because their members must confide, as to the character of an applicant, in the word of the pastor, on what principle do they themselves trust, in the account which is given of him by any of their members when the majority are ignorant of him? May not the pastors and elders obtain in private, all the information which is furnished to the majority by these members in public; and if that majority are disposed to give credit to the latter in an Independent church, why should not the congregation give credit to their pastors in a Presbyterian? Besides, if the members of a Presbyterian congregation are not allowed to state their sentiments and vote before an applicant is received, it is

becauſe the ſcriptures ſeem to veſt that power ſolely in the paſtors. And it certainly appears more conſiſtent with that *tenderneſs* and *juſtice* which are due to ſuch applicants, that their qualifications ſhould be examined *in private* by the miniſters of the church, and that all neceſſary inquiries ſhould be made concerning them by him and by the elders, than that every particular the moſt delicate and important, reſpecting their character, ſhould be laid open at large to the ſcrutiny and review of a *whole congregation;* or that they ſhould wait till *each* of the members be perſonally ſatisfied reſpecting them. It would thus ſeem that the paſtors alone, without ſoliciting the judgment of the members, are authorized by ſcripture to perform this part of eccleſiaſtical government, and that this conſtitution is alſo better fitted than that of Independency to promote the ends of Chriſtian edification *.

Next to the power of admitting members to religious fellowſhip, and ſuperior to it undoubtedly in point of magnitude, is that of ordaining office-bearers to the exerciſe of their function. This power likewiſe appears to belong excluſively to the paſtors of the church, and neither ſolely nor conjointly to the Chriſtian people.

* It might alſo have been added, that were it judged expedient, even upon the Preſbyterian ſyſtem, when any perſon applies for the privilege of membership, it could be announced to the congregation, and any member who could ſubſtantiate any objections to his admiſſion, as in the caſe of election to the office of elders, be invited to ſtate them to the miniſter or ſeſſion. And it is known to be conſiſtent with our Preſbyterian conſtitution, that the firſt time a perſon receives a token for admiſſion to the ſupper, it may be delivered to him in the preſence of the whole congregation, ſo that being ſolemnly pointed out to thoſe of the members at large, who chooſe to attend, as a fellow-member, they may recognize him in that light, and treat him as ſuch.

Many, indeed, of the modern Independents in England maintain, that ordination ſhould not now be performed before a perſon is appointed to the charge of a congregation; that the impoſition of hands was uſed only for the communication of miraculous gifts; and that the paſtoral relation is formed ſimply by the invitation of the people. Some of them, who invite miniſters to a ſettlement, expreſsly diſcard the idea of ordination, and ſay it is only a meeting for prayer and exhortation. And Dr. Prieſtley, one of the moſt zealous of modern Independents, to prevent the people from forming any other opinion of it, recommended that before this ſettlement actually takes place, the young miniſter ſhould diſpenſe the ſacraments to the church.

To affirm, however, that ordination is now unneceſſary, and that an invitation from the people is all that is requiſite to form a paſtoral relation, and to conſtitute him whom they elect a regular paſtor, ſeems to be contrary at once to reaſon and to ſcripture. Simple election may declare the qualification of a perſon who is approved of by the electors, for diſcharging the duties of his office, but it cannot by itſelf inveſt him with that office. When Moſes ſaid to the Iſraelites (Deut. i. 13.), "Take ye wiſe "men and underſtanding, and known among your tribes, "and I *will make* them rulers over you," he plainly intimates, that the choice of the people was not ſufficient of itſelf to conſtitute thoſe whom they elected rulers, unleſs accompanied by an official appointment from himſelf. Deacons, alſo, when firſt appointed in the Chriſtian church, after being elected by the people (Acts vi. 3.), were ſolemnly ordained with prayer, and the impoſition of hands, by the Apoſtles. But if this was neceſſary in an office ſo inferior as that of the deacon, even after the election of the people, much more muſt it be requiſite in an office ſo ſuperior as that of the paſtor. We are informed alſo, that Paul, together with Barnabas (Acts xiv. 23.),

notwithſtanding the choice of the people (if ſuch a choice was exerciſed), *ordained* elders in every church, in Lyſtra, and Iconium, and Antioch; that Titus (Tit. i. 5.) was left in Crete, "to *ordain* elders," though choſen by the churches, "in every city, as Paul had appointed "him;" that this Apoſtle enjoined Timothy (1 Tim. v. 22.) "to lay hands ſuddenly upon no man," *i. e.* not to ordain him raſhly, which appears unaccountable, if popular election alone had been ſufficient to make the object of it a paſtor. If the choice of the people, moreover, conſtitutes a perſon the paſtor of an Independent congregation, it ſeems neceſſarily to follow, that ſince no act performed by one Independent church is binding on another, if the congregation which choſe him withdraw from his miniſtry, or oblige him to leave them, his miniſtry muſt ceaſe with it, and he muſt again be reduced to the ſtation of a private member. Beſides, though the obſervance of the impoſition of hands was occaſionally employed as an emblem of the communication of miraculous powers, it cannot be demonſtrated that this was its *uniform* uſe, or that, from its being the medium *at times* of the communication of theſe powers, it ſhould now be diſcontinued. *Prayer* too, we know (Acts viii. 14.—17. and ix. 40. &c.), was occaſionally a mean of imparting theſe powers; but would any Independent preſume, from this circumſtance, to argue, as ſome do reſpecting the impoſition of hands, that prayer ſhould now be diſcontinued in the church? This uſage then, when employed in *ordination*, was intended merely as an emblem of the ſupplications of thoſe who were engaged in performing it, that all neceſſary, *common*, and *ordinary* endowments might be beſtowed on the perſon on whom they laid their hands.

This *laying on of hands* is mentioned by Paul (Heb. vi. 2.) as one of the *firſt principles* of the doctrine of

Chriſt. This, ſurely, cannot denote a communication of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, for all the other articles of Chriſtian faith which he ſpecifies as *primary* or *fundamental*, do not relate to what was peculiar to the *primitive* church, but are of equal importance to *every* age. It appears difficult alſo to conceive how *this* particular miracle ſhould have been of ſuch uncommon moment as to merit being conſidered in this intereſting light, and that the knowledge and belief of it, whatever other information a perſon might poſſeſs, was eſſential to his being received as a member. By the impoſition of hands then, as Ameſius obſerves in his refutation of Bellarmine (tom. ii. p. 76.), ſeems unqueſtionably to be deſigned the Chriſtian miniſtry, of the communication of which this obſervance was a ſign. In confirmation of this, as well as in refutation of the ſentiments of Epiſcopalians and Papiſts, nothing appears more juſt than the words of Cartwright, in his Treatiſe againſt the Rhemiſts. "By "impoſition of hands the Apoſtle meaneth no ſacrament, "much leſs confirmation after baptiſm; but by a trope "and borrowed ſpeech the miniſtry of the church, "upon the which hands were *laid*, which appeareth in "that whoſoever believeth that there ought not to be a "miniſtry in order to teach, and govern the church, "overthroweth Chriſtianity; whereas if confirmation "of children were a ſacrament, as it is not, yet a man "holding the reſt, and denying the uſe of it, might not-"withſtanding be ſaved."

We perceive likewiſe, that Timothy is commanded by Paul (1 Tim. iv. 14.), "not to *neglect* the gift which "was in him, and which was given him by or ac-"cording to prophecy *, with the laying on of the

* It would ſeem that certain predictions had been delivered concerning Timothy, that he would be an eminent and uſeful miniſter; in conſequence of which it is here declared, that in the uſual way he had been ſet apart to that office.

" hands of the Preſbytery." But if the laying on of the hands of the Preſbytery on Timothy had imparted to him any miraculous gift of the Spirit, how could he have *neglected* diligently to exerciſe it, ſince being entirely under the guidance of his extraordinary influence, and directed by his ſupernatural irreſiſtible energy, he could not have withſtood this inſtinctive impulſe to employ thoſe endowments which he had received, *whenever* and *wherever* the Spirit ſuggeſted. And if the impoſition of hands, when uſed even in ordaining an Evangeliſt to his office, does not appear in the preſent inſtance to have been the ſign of the communication of miraculous gifts, may it not be the emblem of the communication only of common gifts alſo to ordinary miniſters? In fine, this ſame Apoſtle, in this Epiſtle (chap. v. ver. 22.), enjoins this Evangeliſt " to lay hands " ſuddenly upon no man." But if the gifts which were to be conferred, in the ordination referred to, were altogether extraordinary, how could this injunction have been delivered? Could Timothy, when under the *miraculous guidance* of the Spirit, impart *precipitately* his *ſupernatural* gifts to thoſe who were unfit or unworthy to receive them? or could he err, as to the proper perſons who ſhould obtain them? The ſuppoſition is certainly inadmiſſible. From this reaſoning we may therefore conclude, that ſimple *election*, without *ordination*, cannot conſtitute a man a Chriſtian miniſter, and that the impoſition of hands, employed in ordination, was not an emblem of the communication of miraculous gifts, but of ordinary endowments; and of courſe, that it, as well as ordination, muſt be a ſtanding ordinance in the church of God?

But granting that ordination ſhould ſtill be obſerved, who are the perſons that are authorized to perform it? Is it the *people alone*, or in conjunction with the elders? or is it thoſe only who are miniſters? That it is com-

mitted to the latter alone, appears to be the general opinion of *your* churches, for *miniſters* alone, as far as I know, ordain your paſtors. That ſuch alſo is the determination of ſcripture appears evident from a very curſory peruſal of the ſacred volume. Not only is it obvious that the majority of the people are totally *unfit* to examine the qualifications of a man for the important and arduous work of the miniſtry, and conſequently that it would be dangerous to intruſt them with ſuch power; and not only is it ridiculous to imagine that thoſe who can neither preach nor diſpenſe the ſacraments, can impart an office while they have *none* themſelves, but it is never affirmed in any part of ſcripture that the people are to ordain. On the contrary, we are informed, that when the firſt deacons were choſen by the diſciples, they were ordained by the Apoſtles (Acts vi.)—that when Timothy was inveſted with the office of a miniſter, it was by the laying on of the hands of the elderſhip or preſbytery, of which Paul was a member (compare 1 Tim. iv. 14. with 2 Tim. i. 6.)—that "when faithful men, "and men who were found able to teach others alſo," were inveſted with the miniſtry in the places where he was labouring, it was to be committed to them by him and his fellow-elders (2 Tim. ii. 2.)—that when hands, as was before ſaid, were to be laid upon any, to ſet them apart to this office, it was he alone, and his fellow-miniſters, who were required to do it (1 Tim. v. 22.)—and that when elders were to be ordained in every city in Crete, it was only Titus, and his fellow-miniſters, who were to devote them to their work. Is it not wonderful however, that if it be the prerogative of the *people*, either *with* elders or *without* them, to ordain others to the work of the miniſtry, not a ſyllable ſhould be mentioned of their being inveſted with this truſt, or exerciſing this power, and that it ſhould be repreſented uniformly as committed to the miniſters?

Robinſon, indeed, with ſome ancient Engliſh and American Independents, and Lockier, one of the ancient, with ſome of our modern Scotch Independents, have not ſcrupled to maintain that Matthias, who was choſen in place of Judas, was ordained by the hundred and twenty diſciples, who were partly compoſed of the eleven apoſtles, partly of the ſeventy diſciples, and partly of the private members of the church. All who were preſent could not however be admitted to ordain Matthias, for among theſe "were the women, and Mary the mother of "Jeſus;" and it has never yet been alleged by any Independent, as far as I have heard, that *women* are to be allowed the honour of ordaining a miniſter. It is evident alſo, that no account is given of his ordination, but ſimply of his *election*, and there is nothing very decided to lead us to ſuppoſe that he was even choſen by lot by any but the Apoſtles. "Wherefore of theſe "men," ſays Peter, "that have companied with us "(the Apoſtles), all the time that the Lord Jeſus went "in and out among us, muſt one be ordained to be a "witneſs with us (undoubtedly the Apoſtles) of his "reſurrection." Beſides, it merits our particular notice, that there was not properly even an *election*, either by the Apoſtles or the people. Two men were named as fit for the apoſtleſhip; and *the Lord himſelf*, in a ſupernatural manner, as they drew out the lots, pointed out to them the individual. The word συγκατεψηφισθη (ver. 26.), which is rendered by our tranſlators, "he was numbered" with the Apoſtles, and by the Vulgate, "annumeratus "eſt cum undecim Apoſtolis," does not intimate that he was ordained by the people, as Lockier contended; but as the learned Mr. Caudrey, in his Vindiciæ Clavium, p. 29. ſays, "That ſeeing God had choſen and ordained "him, they accepted him by *orderly ſubjection* to the "revealed will of Chriſt." Accordingly, we find the verb ψηφιζω, of which this is a compound, in Luke xiv. 28.

signifying to count or reckon the cost of a thing; and in Rev. xiii. 18. it is employed to denote the counting of the number of the beast; from which it would seem, that συγκατεψηφισθη is properly rendered by our translators, "and he was numbered," not ordained, with the Apostles, and simply means that he was henceforth counted or reckoned by the church as one of them.

It is argued farther, that the people must be admitted along with the pastors to ordain ministers, because when it is said of Paul and Barnabas (Acts xiv. 23.) that "they ordained elders in every city," the word χειροτονησαντες, in their opinion, properly signifies that they chose them by suffrage or vote; and as there were only two of them, they think that they could not themselves choose them, but simply presided at an election of them by the people. But on this it may be remarked, that if their translation were adopted, it would only shew that the people *elected*, but not that they *ordained* the elders, two things which are extremely different; for, in any of your congregations, for example, though the members elect, it is the ministers of other churches alone who ordain a pastor. Besides, though the word, as applied to the customs of ancient Greece, literally signifies election by suffrage, expressed by lifting up the hand of the elector, it never denotes to *preside* at an election. We know, too, that it means often to constitute or appoint to an office *without suffrage* or vote. Thus Josephus, in his Antiquities, book vi. chap. iv. speaks of "a king "appointed by God, Βασιλευς ὑπο του Θεου χειροτονηθεις;" and thus, too, Acts x. 40, 41. "Him God raised up "the third day, and shewed him openly, not to all the "people, but to witnesses chosen before of God, "προκεχειροτονημενοις." Since, then, it must be plain to every person who looks for a moment at the grammatical arrangement of Acts xiv. 23. that it was Paul and Barnabas who did what is expressed by χειροτονησαντες, in

ver. 23. as much as it was they who, according to ver. 22. confirmed the souls of the disciples, and exhorted them to continue in the faith; since this word *never* signifies, as far as has been yet ascertained, to *preside* at an election, where the choice is made by those who vote by lifting up the hand; since it means to *constitute*, or *ordain*, as well as to elect; since it is never taken in the latter sense, but where it is used to express the act of at least more than two; and since there were only two, in the present instance, who did what is intended by it; it appears naturally to follow that it cannot denote in the place in question, that the Apostles themselves elected elders by vote in every city, and much less that they presided at the election of them by others, but simply, as our venerable translators have rendered it, that they themselves "ordained them." And with this idea the version of the Vulgate or Old Latin, which formerly was so generally received by the churches, accurately coincides: "Et cum constituissent illis per "singulas ecclesias presbyteros;" *i. e.* "And when "they had *constituted* or *ordained* elders to them in every "church." But what argument can be deduced from this, for admitting the people to join with their pastors in ordaining ministers*?

* It is objected farther by them, that the Presbytery who ordained Timothy to the office of an Evangelist could not be ordinary pastors, because they were greatly inferior to him, but Apostles or Prophets; and of course, that no argument can be drawn from his ordination by such a Presbytery, for the exclusive right of our present ministers to ordain. To this it is replied, that if, according to the spirit of this objection, only superior ministers could ordain Timothy, how can it be argued that the *people*, who are greatly inferior to a minister, can ordain a *minister?*—that even though it were granted that the Presbytery which ordained Timothy was composed of extraordinary ministers, they did not act as such, but merely in the ordinary capacity of elders, as the word presbytery or eldership suggests—and that for

Thus, then, it would seem that we have no authority from scripture for allowing the people to ordain pastors, and that it is the ministers of the gospel, and they alone, who are warranted by the word of God, as well as by the explicit declaration of *your* churches, to perform this important act of ecclesiastical government.

Farther, while it is undeniable that the power of *exercising discipline* is committed to those who are office-bearers of the church, it does not appear that it is vested also indiscriminately in all who are members.

That the power of discipline is conferred upon the office-bearers must be evident to us, on reading with impartiality the following passages. "Then said Jesus "to them again (the eleven Apostles), Peace be unto "you: as my father hath sent me, even so send I you. "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted; and "whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained:" John xx. 21. 23. "Against an elder receive not an accusa-"tion, but before two or three witnesses:" 1 Tim. v. 19. And that it is ministers alone who are to receive this accusation, and examine these witnesses, seems manifest from this, that it is they alone who are to do it that are commanded in the next verse, "to rebuke before all "such as sinned, that others might fear," by whom we are certainly to understand the ministers. And again, says Paul to Titus (chap. iii. 10.), "A man that is an "heretic, after a first and second admonition, reject." While such however are the repeated declarations of

any thing that we know, there may have been among them ordinary ministers, who might have been admitted with as much propriety, as they were already ministers, to ordain an Evangelist, as teachers, who certainly were but ordinary ministers, were allowed with prophets (Acts xiii. 1, 2, 3.), to set apart, by prayer and imposition of hands, Paul and Barnabas, one of whom was an Apostle and the other an Evangelist, to a particular work in the city of Antioch.

ſcripture reſpecting the commiſſion of this power to the miniſters, not a ſingle inſtance has yet been produced where it is *explicitly* affirmed to be intruſted with the people. Paſſages have indeed been adduced by Independents, from the eighteenth of Matthew, and the Firſt and Second Epiſtles to the Corinthians, to demonſtrate that this power has been veſted alſo in the people. But we truſt it will appear from the following Letters, that it cannot be proved from either of theſe paſſages, that the people *perſonally* are to exerciſe this power; and that, agreeably to our common modes of ſpeaking, all that is there affirmed to be done by them, may be done by them ſolely by means of their repreſentatives. On the contrary, however, while not a ſingle inſtance has yet been brought forward, where the members of the church, as *diſtinguiſhed* from the miniſters, or as *joined* to them, are intruſted with this power, the office-bearers, who are elſewhere characterized as governors, without the addition of any other perſon, are commanded to exerciſe it. Since the *elders* of the church, then, are the *only* perſons who are expreſsly declared to be veſted with this power; ſince the members, *as diſtinguiſhed* from the elders, are never ſaid to have received this authority, nor to be *joined* with them as eccleſiaſtical overſeers in ſuch a manner as that their vote muſt be aſked before it can be exerted; and ſince all that is ſaid to be done by the members could be done by them ſimply through their elders or repreſentatives, without expreſſing any judgment or vote of their own; it appears to be a fair and natural concluſion, that the elders of the church, without the members, are to decide in matters of diſcipline as well as government.

But if the elders alone, as was now evinced, are to admit members, ordain office-bearers, and exerciſe diſcipline, it neceſſarily follows that it is they alone, in every thing, who are to govern the church. The former confeſſedly are more important matters, and if in-

truſted excluſively with the management of theſe, why ſhould they not excluſively be inveſted alſo with the adminiſtration of what is inferior? Beſides, as was remarked, is it not aſſerted by Mr. Ewing, that the members are not to judge in inferior points, from the baneful conſequences which, in his opinion, would reſult from it to the cauſe of truth; and of courſe, ſince they are not to determine in more intereſting matters, is it not evident that they are not to judge at all?

Upon a review then of this as well as the preceding arguments, I feel diſpoſed to conclude that the elders alone, and not the people, are to govern the church, and that the former are to adminiſter it without even ſoliciting the conſent of the latter; and this concluſion I am authorized to conſider as unavoidable, unleſs it can be proved that the arguments which have been urged for this Preſbyterian principle are *equally explicable* upon the Independent plan, and are contradicted by *ſuperior unexceptionable proof.* In the following Letters it is propoſed to conſider theſe proofs in order, which have been urged for Independency, with the degree of force which they ſeem to poſſeſs, to *counterbalance* and overpower the different arguments which appear to be preſented by the ſacred writings in favour of Preſbytery.

LETTER VI.

SIR,

THAT that the people are entitled, in matters which relate to eccleſiaſtical polity, to judge and vote as well as their elders, you think to be evident from Matth. xviii. 15, 16, 17. "Where our Lord," you ſay (p. 33.), "gives his people particular directions reſpecting their "conduct in the caſe of offences. *Moreover, if thy*

" *brother ſhall treſpaſs againſt thee, go and tell him his fault* " *between thee and him alone: if he ſhall hear thee, thou* " *haſt gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then* " *take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two* " *or three witneſſes every word may be eſtabliſhed. And if* " *he ſhall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if* " *he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an* " *Heathen man and a Publican.* Here, by the church to " whom the offence of a brother is to be told, you " think is intended a particular congregation, and every " member in it; and in proof of it remark, that in the " ſcriptures the word *church* has two ſignifications. It " either denotes the whole aſſembly of thoſe redeemed " by the blood of Chriſt, or an individual ſociety. In " this laſt ſenſe it is ſometimes applied to a meeting of " any deſcription. It is thus uſed, Acts xix. 32. where " the word generally tranſlated church, is rendered aſ- " ſembly. When in this laſt and more reſtricted ſenſe " it is applied to Chriſtians, it is plainly deſcriptive of " thoſe who meet together for Chriſtian fellowſhip in an " individual ſociety. Agreeably to this it is deſerving " of remark, that when the Chriſtians ſcattered over a " province are mentioned, who of courſe met in dif- " ferent ſocieties, the word *church* is always found in " the plural. Thus we have the churches of Judea, the " churches of Macedonia, the churches of Galatia, *&c.* " Examples of the firſt uſe of the term occur, Col. i. 18. " Eph. i. 22. Heb. xii. 23.; and of the ſecond, Acts " ix. 31. xiv. 23. 1 Cor. xiv. 23. In no caſe does it ſeem " employed to denote the rulers of a church as diſtin- " guiſhed from the general body, though in Acts xv. 22. " it is uſed to deſcribe the latter of theſe as diſtinguiſhed " from the former. As in the paſſage then above quot- " ed, it would be impoſſible to comply with the admo- " nition, if by the word church, the *church univerſal* is " meant, it is plain the expreſſion cannot be underſtood

" in any other ſenſe than as denoting the particular " ſociety of Chriſtians with which we are connected. " To theſe the offence is to be told. If the offending " brother will not hear them, he is to be viewed as a " Heathen man and a Publican, in the ſame light as " thoſe who are ſtill in a ſtate of Heatheniſm, and not " members of the church at all: in other words, he is to " be excluded from the ſociety. In this paſſage nothing " ſeems plainer, than that the deciſion of the church is " to be conſidered as final. There is not the ſmalleſt " hint about the poſſibility of an appeal; nay, we may " ſafely aſſert, that with ſuch a ſyſtem as a court of re- " view, by which the deciſion of an individual ſociety " may be reverſed, the language is altogether incom- " patible."

In anſwer to this, however, I would ſhortly obſerve, that it ſeems by no means juſt to affirm, that the *church* in ſcripture ſignifies either the church univerſal, or a particular congregation. It is applied in ſcripture, for inſtance, to the church at Jeruſalem, many years after the goſpel had been preached there, and preached even by eleven apoſtles, and many prophets and evangeliſts, as well as paſtors and teachers, with wonderful ſucceſs. Now, when beſtowed upon this church, Preſbyterians have aſſerted, and the church, which you have left, endeavours to prove in her public ſtandards, that it undoubtedly includes a *number* of congregations united in ſuch a manner, in point of government, as that while they ſtill remained *ſeparate* congregations, and furniſhed ſufficient employment even for all theſe miniſters, they conſtituted only *one church*. But to attempt to diſprove this, and overthrow the argument adduced from it by her, for the ſubordination of a number of congregations to the review of a Preſbytery, as well as to their own particular rulers, by a ſimple aſſertion that the *word is not ſo to be underſtood*, appears to me not ingenuous. It is

plainly what has been denominated by logicians *a begging the queſtion*, or taking for granted the very thing to be proved, which ſpecies of proof, however eaſy and expeditious, is unqueſtionably unfair, and was ſcarcely to be expected from you, who had engaged to put your readers in poſſeſſion of the principal arguments on both ſides of the queſtion. Not only however does the word church, in theſe and other paſſages, ſignify a number of congregations united in ſuch a manner as to have one common government, while at the ſame time they had each their particular rulers, but it appears even ſometimes to mean the office-bearers of the church as diſtinguiſhed from the members. In this ſenſe it ſeems to be taken in Acts viii. 1. where we are told, that "there was a great "perſecution on the ſame day (εν εκεινη τη ἡμερᾳ) againſt "the church which was at Jeruſalem; and that they were "*all* ſcattered abroad about the regions of Judea and Sama-"ria, *except the Apoſtles*." Now, that by the church here ſpecified, who were *all* ſcattered abroad except the Apoſtles, is intended only the miniſters, and not the members, appears to be moſt probable, not only from this, that the miniſters would be more readily marked out as the firſt objects of their vengeance by the enemies of Chriſtianity *, and that all thoſe who are mentioned of

* That the Apoſtles at this time did not flee from Jeruſalem is indeed remarkable. "Perhaps," as a judicious author obſerves, "the Jewiſh rulers, finding that neither threats, nor any puniſh-"ment which they could inflict, could deter them from their "duty, were unwilling to exhibit a new proof of the weakneſs of "their power. Perhaps, as they continued in a more public "part of the city, where multitudes attended, their enemies "were afraid of exciting a tumult by attacking them. Or, per-"haps, Saul ſpared them from reſpect to the opinion of his "maſter Gamaliel." Or, as might have been added, as they in particular were appointed to be witneſſes of the reſurrection of Chriſt, they might ſee it to be their duty to remain in that city

them who were ſcattered abroad, as Philip. (ver. 5.), and Simeon, and Lucius, and Manaen (chap. xiii. 1.), were of this deſcription; but that even after it is affirmed here, that *all the* church were ſcattered abroad *except the Apoſtles*, it is aſſerted in the 3d verſe, that a *church still remained* different from the former, and a church which Saul perſecuted, and the men and women of which, entering into their houſes he committed to priſon. But if *the whole* of the church referred to in ver. 1. as we are informed, were ſcattered abroad *except the Apoſtles*; and if at the ſame time it be inſtantly ſubjoined, that there was *still* a church after this left at Jeruſalem, of which thoſe alone are mentioned who were not miniſters; is it not obvious, that, in the former verſe, the church who are ſpoken of, and are declared to have been *all* ſcattered abroad except the Apoſtles, can have been the *miniſters* only of that Chriſtian church? Here then is one inſtance in which it would ſeem, that by the church we are certainly to underſtand its office-bearers as diſtinguiſhed from its members; and this application of the term appears no leſs defenſible upon the principle of ſubſtituting a part for the whole, than the application of it to the members excluſively of the miniſters in Acts xv. 22. agreeably to the view which you give of that paſſage.

Since then this term is applied to the office-bearers, in diſtinction from the members, as well as to the members, when diſtinguiſhed from the office-bearers, or, as in other caſes, when conjoined with them, in which of the ſenſes is it to be underſtood in this paſſage, when a Chriſtian is commanded to tell the offence of his brother to the church? That it has been admitted to refer to the firſt of theſe by ſome of the moſt reſpectable even of the

where he had riſen from the dead, to bear teſtimony there for a while to this fact, even though it ſhould expoſe them to ſuffering. See Robertſon's Lay-preaching Indefenſible, p. 38.

Independents themſelves, is a fact which is incontrovertible. The famous Mr. Parker of New England, in his Tract. de Polit. lib. iii. cap. xv. allows explicitly that the firſt time it is mentioned in Matth. xviii. 17. it means *the elders*, and *they alone*, though in the following clauſe, however inconſiſtently, he ſuppoſes it denotes the people as concurring with them. His words are, "Eccleſiam "primo loco conſideratam in his verbis, *præciſe partem* "*ariſtocraticam*, id eſt preſbyterium, ſignificare exiſti-"mamus;" *i. e.* "We think that the church, in the "firſt of theſe clauſes, ſignifies *expreſsly the ariſtocratic* "*part*, or *the elders*." And that it has been conſidered, or at leaſt acted upon, by others of them in the ſame light is no leſs certain. The celebrated Hooker of America, in his Survey, part iii. chap. iii. p. 36. affirms, that in a caſe of offence, the matter is firſt to be told to *the elders*; that it is their prerogative to examine whether the point is of ſufficient magnitude as to be made a ſubject of judicial authoritative inveſtigation, to call witneſſes, to review the evidence, and conſider the ſentence which is proportioned to the offence, before the matter is to be laid before the members. And ſuch, alſo, at leaſt is the *practice* of many of the preſent bodies of Independents, whoſe elders are the perſons to whom, if the offending brother refuſes to yield, when admoniſhed of his fault before two or three witneſſes, the offence is told, and who make a particular inquiry into the buſineſs before it is announced to the congregation. Such, too, if I am not miſinformed, is the practice of your own ſociety, and of its ſiſter-churches. But without farther detailing the ſentiments of Independents, the *practice* at leaſt of many of whom, with regard to the perſons to whom the offence is to be told, after the private admonition, is the ſame with that of Preſbyterians, I proceed to obſerve that it is equally natural, and much more conſiſtent, to underſtand by the church, in the paſſage before us, the

elders of the congregation, than the congregation at large connected with the office-bearers.

In the 1st place, It seems plain that in what our Lord here says, as to the mode of procedure in the Christian church, he alludes to the Jewish ecclesiastical courts, the synagogue and the sanhedrin, which at that time were familiar to the minds of the Jews, and from which most probably they would form their ideas of the import of his words. This is not only affirmed by Calvin, Beza, Paræus, and other learned expositors, but is granted even by the venerable Goodwin, the most distinguished of the seven Independent brethren who sat in the Assembly of Divines at Westminster. "The allusion of Jesus," says he (p. 57. 58. of his Treatise on Government), "is to the "synagogues in every town, which were the ecclesiastical "state. The books of Moses were read in every city, "in the synagogues: Acts xv. 21. To tell the church "therefore," he remarks, "was to tell *that particular* "*synagogue* of which they were members;" and this he endeavours to prove by a variety of arguments. And that this was the meaning of Christ appears also from the words which are subjoined, "Let him be to thee as a "*Heathen man and a Publican;*" which I observe, in opposition to Mr. Glass *, you rightly consider (p. 34.)

* See his Letters to Ayton, in the first volume of his Works, p. 287. where he denies that this passage refers to the order of the Jewish church, or to excommunication from their societies; and affirms, after Prynne and some ancient Independents, that it contains merely a command to Christians to abstain from civil intercourse and from eating with an obstinate offending brother, as the Jews abstained from associating or eating with a Heathen or a Publican, referring us to 1 Cor. v. 11. compared with Acts x. 28. and xi. 3. It does not however appear that civil intercourse was prohibited to the Jews with the Heathens, or was avoided by them, though we know that they did not cultivate religious fellowship. On the contrary, we find that Nehemiah permitted the Tyrians to sell their commodities to the children

as denoting *exclusion from the church*, and which, according to Goodwin (p. 59.), are similar in import to "casting "out of the synagogue." Benjamin of Tudela moreover, when speaking of the Massilian synagogue, thrice

of Israel on every day but the Sabbath (Neh. xiii. 16.—21)—that the servants of Hiram and of Solomon were employed together in building the temple—that Jehoshaphat associated with the king of Edom (2 Kings iii.)—and that, in the reign of Solomon, there were no less than a hundred and fifty thousand and six hundred Heathens in the land of Judea, with whom the Israelites could not fail to mingle. The intercourse, then, of which Peter speaks (Acts x. 28.), as quoted by Glass, must have been a *religious* intercourse; and this seems to be evident not only from its being stated as the end for which Cornelius requested an interview (ver. 22.), "that he might hear words," or religious instructions, "from him," but also from the translation of his words in the Syriac version (ver. 28.), "Ye know that it is unlawful for a man that is a Jew *to* "*join himself* unto a man that is a stranger, who is not a son of his "generation," *i. e.* in religious fellowship. And as it appears plain that it was only religious intercourse which was avoided with the Heathens by the Jews, so it has been asserted, and asserted with considerable plausibility, that they were not prohibited from eating every kind of food with the Gentiles, but only such as was unclean. Tostatus, upon 2 Chron. vi. and Grotius, in his book de Jure Bell. et Pac. lib. ii. cap. xv. sect. ix. expressly affirm, that it was only such meats as were prohibited by the law that the Jews were ordered not to eat with the Heathens, but that all other things they might eat with them. And Drusius, in his Quæst. et Resp. lib. ii. Quæst. lxvii. mentions an old law, from one of the writings of the Rabbis, Elias in Thesbite, which forbad the Jews to drink *wine* with Heathens, and was made at the time when the Gentiles used prelibations of wine in their sacred rites: "Lata videlicet eo tempore quo gentes vinum libabant in sacris." But such a prohibition, and especially for *such a reason*, proves that the Jews might eat and drink with the Gentiles all other things which were not unclean, or employed for idolatrous purposes. It is obvious then, that to represent our Saviour, in Matth. xviii. as commanding an obstinate offending brother to be treated by his church as a Heathen was treated in these respects by the Jews, who neither refused him civil intercourse, nor

applies to it in one paragraph, and even to its *rulers* alone, the term *kahal*, which is moſt frequently rendered by the Seventy εκκλησια, the very word employed in this paſſage, and tranſlated *church* (ſee Vitringa de Synagoga, p. 563.

heſitated to eat with him whatever meats were not prohibited by the law or uſed by him to idolatrous purpoſes, is to render his words trifling and inſignificant. Beſides, even admitting that they refuſed to have any civil intercourſe with a Heathen, or to eat with him at all, this was only *one part*, and the *leaſt part* of the privileges which they denied him. He could not be a member of their ſynagogues, nor was he allowed to worſhip in the inner court of their temple. Ezek. xliv. 7. 9. Acts xxi. 28. He was viewed, in ſhort, as "an alien from the commonwealth of Iſrael, "and a ſtranger from the covenants of promiſe, having no hope, "and without God in the world." Compare Eph. ii. 11, 12. To conſider the phraſe therefore, "Let him be to thee as a Hea-"then man," as including, on the other hand, any thing leſs than the privation of theſe privileges, is to attach to it a meaning totally below its import and ſignificancy. Whatever other privileges then might be refuſed to the Heathens, as they were evidently excluded by the Jews from their church; and as appears from the New Teſtament, and the writings of the Rabbis, that heretical, or apoſtate, or diſobedient brethren (ſee John ix. xii. 42. xvi. 2. Abarbanel de Capite Fidei, Selden de Jure Natur. et Gent. lib. vi. cap. x.), were caſt by them, like Heathens, out of their ſynagogues—and were obliged, like them, to pay uſury for the money which they received in loan, "Quia fratrum nomen "exuerant;" and, as Grotius obſerves on Luke vi. 22. if they came into the temple, were admitted, like them, only into the outer court, and that too with a particular mark of diſgrace; ſince ſuch was the way in which the Gentiles, or Heathens, were uſually treated by the Jews, and ſince ſuch was the way in which *thoſe of the Jews who apoſtatized* were treated by their church, is it not obvious that when the very *ſame language* is applied in Matthew, to expreſs the conduct of the church of Chriſt towards offending brethren, an evident analogy is pointed out in the latter church to the former, and in the puniſhments of the one to thoſe of the other?

As the alluſion, in fine, from the terms *Heathen* and *Publican*, is plainly Jewiſh, it will not be a valid objection againſt conſider-

564.). It is obſerved alſo by Goodwin, upon good authority, that the word *συναγωγη*, tranſlated "ſynagogue," and the word *εκκλησια*, here rendered "church," are, in a number of inſtances, "all one in the Septuagint." But we know that the firſt of theſe terms, which is often ſynonimous with the word here tranſlated church, is uſed by James, in alluſion to the Jewiſh ſynagogue, to denote either a Chriſtian congregation, or the place where they met, transferring to the latter the name of the former; for the words of that Apoſtle (ſee his Epiſtle, chap. ii. ver. 2.), which are rendered in our verſion, "If there come into your aſſembly, a man with a gold "ring, *&c.*" literally mean, "If there come into your "*ſynagogue.*" And what is tranſlated in our Bibles (Heb. x. 25.), "forſake not the aſſembling of yourſelves "together," literally imports, "your meeting in a "ſynagogue," *επισυναγωγην*. If the very name however, *kahal* or *eccleſia*, here rendered church, be given frequently by *the Rabbis themſelves* to the Jewiſh ſynagogue; if another term, often equivalent to this, and repeatedly uſed in the New Teſtament to denote a ſynagogue, be elſewhere applied to the Chriſtian church; if the conduct which is here enjoined upon this church towards an obſtinate offender, be expreſſed in language preciſely the ſame with that which was deſcriptive of the conduct of the Jews to an impenitent offender whom they caſt out of *their ſynagogue;* and if our Lord, when borrowing theſe terms from the ſynagogue, to denote his church,

ing it as excluſion from their church which is intended, to tell us that it is only the brother who is offended that is to treat the offender as a Heathen and a Publican. If the brother who is offended is to abſtain from religious communion with the offender on account of his ſin, it is certainly no leſs ſtrongly declared in this paſſage, that the church, who are no leſs offended than the brother, becauſe the offender will not hear *them*, muſt treat him as a Heathen, and reject him from their fellowſhip.

and its conduct towards offenders, gives no intimation that they were to be underſtood as to it, in a different acceptation than when applied to the former; it is plain that to aſcertain the import of this paſſage, we muſt have recourſe to the practices of the Jewiſh ſynagogue, and inquire who were the perſons in *that church*, or εκκλησια, to whom offences were told, and who judged reſpecting them.

In examining however who were the perſons of the Jewiſh ſynagogue, or εκκλησια, that adminiſtered its affairs, and determined in this as well as other matters, we perceive that they were the rulers. This is evident not only from the teſtimony of the New Teſtament, but from the writings of their Doctors. Thus, Acts xiii. 15. "And after the reading of the law and the prophets, "*the rulers of the ſynagogue* (αρχισυναγωγοι) ſent unto "Paul and his companions," &c.*: among which rulers

* Without entering particularly into the conſideration of the propriety of the Independent practice, of allowing any of *their members* who chuſes to exhort the church when met together, I think it very obvious that one of the common arguments for it, which they frequently urge from the paſſage here quoted, is totally untenable. We are indeed here informed, that "after the reading "of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the ſynagogue ſent unto "them (Paul and his companions), ſaying, Ye men and brethren, "if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, ſay on." It is to be recollected however, that the church where they were, was not a *Chriſtian congregation*, but a *Jewiſh ſynagogue*; and Vitringa, I think, has proved inconteſtably in his Treatiſe on the Synagogue, lib. iii. pars i. cap. vii. that none but thoſe who were conſidered as Rabbis or Doctors, and who were ſolemnly ſet apart by the impoſition of hands, were permitted, after the reading of the law and the prophets, to exhort the people. For theſe, he tells us, there were particular ſeats in all their ſynagogues, and eſtabliſhes his aſſertion by a variety of references. And in ſome of theſe ſeats he affirms, as we are told by Luke (ver. 14.), that Paul and Barnabas having ſat down, were conſidered by the rulers as Doctors, and were invited, according to the uſual cuſtom, to

it would appear that there was one who was prefident; for we are informed (Luke xiii. 14.), that "the ruler "of the fynagogue (ἀρχισυναγωγος) anfwered with in- "dignation, becaufe Jefus had healed on the Sabbath-

exhort, declaring at the fame time, that it was contrary to the ufual practice in the fynagogue to allow the common members to perform this duty. His words are (p. 709.), "At non de Chrifto "modo, fed et illius apoftolis et difcipulis legimus, quod et illi "*docentium cathedras* occupaverint, et inde pro *Doctoribus* ab iis "agniti fuerint, quorum id fcire intererat. Narratur id in Actis "Apoftolorum, cap. xiii. 14. *Ipfi vero digreffi Perga venerunt "Antiochiam Pifidiæ*, et ingreffi *fynagogam die Sabbati*, και εκαθισαν. Sederunt Paulus et Barnabas fynagogam ingreffi. In- "telligendum, occupaffe eos *fedes docentium*, quod *federe* κατ' "εμφασιν eft in fcripturis fanctis (compare Matth. xxiii. 1, 2. "xxvi. 55. &c.). Sciverunt enim inde archifynagogi, eo forte "animo illos fynagogam ingreffos effe, ut *docerent*. Ita enim per- "git Lucas: *Poft lectionem autem legis et prophetarum miferunt "præfecti fynagogæ ad eos, dicentes: Viri, fratres, fi quis eft in vobis "fermo exhortationis, dicite*. Quænam ratio fuiffet, ut archifyna- "gogi homines hos, fibi, ut plane videtur, ignotos ad *dicendum* "invitaffent, fi *communia vulgi occupaffent fubfellia*, nulloque ex "indicio de eorum aptitudine et docendi animo facti fuiffent "certiores? Et quodnam id effe potuit fignum, quam *feffio*, cum "nihil aliud de ipfis referatur, quam quod fynagogam ingreffi "confederint? Cum vero folus *fedendi* actus non poffit effe in- "dicium vel *Doctoris*, vel intentionis docendi, omnino videtur, "aliam hic fignificari feffionem, quæ *Doctorum* erat." And the fame alfo are the fentiments of Altingius, who expreffly affirms in his Schilo, lib. iii. cap. vi. "Atque in hac ufurpatione (fedendi) "*pro Doctoribus* agniti funt ab archifynagogis, qui facta legis et "prophetarum lectione admiferunt, ut fi meditati acceffiffent "verba in coetu facerent. Neque enim rite hinc concluferis, "cuivis peregrino hoc indultum fuiffe ut publice diceret. Sed "cum peregrini ifti fe *magiftros* profiterentur *fedendi* privilegio, "præfecti fynagogæ, ipfis id honoris detulerunt." Whatever then be the arguments which can be adduced by Independents for allowing the members to addrefs the church, it would appear that they are not entitled to advance any from the prefent paffage. And though it is granted that it is the duty of believers in gene-

" day." See alſo Mark v. 35, 36. 38. Acts xvii. 8. 17. Accordingly it is ſaid by Joſephus, in his account of his life, p. 1020. and 1022. that the ſynagogue at Tiberias was governed by a preſident, *αρχων*, and a ſenate of elders, *βουλην*: *Συνειδων δε την μεταβολην Ιησους, τον μεν δημον εκελευεν αναχωρειν, προσμειναι δε την βουλην ηξιωσε*; *i. e.* " But " Jeſus, the preſident, ſeeing the ſtate of things altered, " ordered the people to depart, but thought it proper " that the *ſenate*," or, as it is in the Latin tranſlation, *ſenatum ſolum*, " ſhould remain." And Maimonides, a celebrated Jewiſh Rabbi, in Hilcoth Taanioth, cap. iv. ſect. i. in his Tract. de Jejuniis, repreſents a ſynagogue at Jeruſalem as governed by one, whom he denominates *princeps* or chief, and *pater* or father, and a *ſynedrium aut collegium ſapientium*, *i. e.* a ſenate or college of wiſe men. The number of the rulers in their ſynagogues in large cities, according to Benjamin of Tudela, as quoted by Vitringa, was ſometimes very great; and even in their leaſt ſynagogues, " they were never leſs," ſays Goodwin (p. 58.), " than three, that a major vote might caſt it " among them." Now if a Jew, when offended, though he made known his complaint in the hearing of the other members of the ſynagogue, ſubmitted it for judgment to the Scribes and Doctors, who were rulers of the ſynagogue, and them alone; and if our Saviour, when ſpeaking of the manner in which an offended brother was to proceed in his church, uſes preciſely the very ſame language, and bids him tell it expreſsly to a *ſimilar church*; is it not plain, that, ſo far at leaſt as *the preſent paſſage*

ral, no leſs under the new than under the old diſpenſation, to converſe with one another, in the houſe and by the way, upon the truths of religion, and provoke and exhort one another to every good work, it may perhaps be difficult to prove from the ſcriptures, that when a congregation is met in a *church-capacity*, any member who chuſes is warranted to riſe, and publicly to exhort, or admoniſh, or inſtruct them.

is concerned, instead of proving the right of every member of a Christian congregation to hear and judge in a case of offence, it demonstrates that this power, as in the *Jewish synagogue*, is committed to the rulers, and the *rulers exclusively*.

Again, as there was a right of appeal from the determination of the rulers of a particular synagogue to their great sanhedrin, or council of seventy, is it not obvious that *this passage*, instead of favouring the Independent plan, of constituting every congregation a complete court in itself, without subjecting it to the review of a Presbytery, strongly establishes the very contrary; and exhibits clearly these first principles of Presbyterians, that, as in the Jewish courts, it is the elders alone who are entitled to govern a particular congregation, and that these again are subject to the authoritative review of other courts, who can either affirm or reverse their decisions *?

Is it said, in fine, that we are informed in *other* places, that the form of government in the New-Testament church is *completely different* from that which existed in the synagogue and sanhedrin, and consequently that it cannot be inferred from *this* passage, that the administration should be committed in a particular congregation only to those who are elders, and that these again should be subject to the authoritative review of a higher court? It is replied, that when this is proved from *these other* passages, the inference will be dropt—

* Accordingly Prynne, a very noted ancient divine, who favoured some of the sentiments of Independents, in his Answer to Gillespie, affirms, in opposition to you, that by the church, or assembly, mentioned by Matthew, is intended, not the members of a particular congregation, but the *sanhedrin;* and quotes Josephus, as if he had spoken of this text, and applied the *very name* here employed by the Evangelist to that celebrated court. For an account of this court, and of the synagogue, with a solution of some objections urged against this argument, see Appendix.

that it is readily granted, that in *ſo far* as the form of government is demonſtrated from *theſe* paſſages to be altered, it ought to be altered—but that unleſs it can be evinced from them, that it is changed in the points about which we are *now* inquiring, and is taken from the elders in a particular congregation, and in an equal degree given to all the members of a congregation, without any poſſibility of appeal to a higher court, the inference is good. So far, however, as the paſſage before us is *viewed in itſelf*, and explained by the alluſion to which it refers, though brought forward by you and the reſt of your brethren, as *the firſt argument* for Independency, it ſeems naturally to eſtabliſh the very contrary, and to prove that in a Chriſtian congregation, as in a Jewiſh ſynagogue, it is the elders alone, and not the members, and the elders as ſubordinate to the authoritative review of a ſuperior court, who are appointed to govern the church of God *.

* It is urged indeed by Goodwin (p. 60.), that no argument can be adduced in favour of Preſbytery, from the application of the terms deſcriptive of the ſynagogue and of the mode of procedure in it, in caſes of offence to the Chriſtian church, "becauſe "the manner is oftentimes to ſpeak in the language of the Old "Teſtament when the ſame thing," or an exact correſpondency to it "is not meant; as when Chriſt ſpeaks of the perſon offending, Matth. v. 22. he expreſſeth the degrees of puniſhment to "ſeveral ſins, under the names of three courts amongſt the Jews, "and yet he meaneth ſpiritual degrees of puniſhment. Thus, too, "in 1 Cor. ix. 13. the whole ſervice of the ſanctuary is called *the* "*altar* (he that ſerveth at the altar, muſt live of the altar); yet "there is no ſuch altar erected amongſt us as was amongſt the "Jews. And the prophets alſo, propheſying of the times of "the goſpel, ſpake of our ordinances anew to be inſtituted in Old-"Teſtament language; ſo, in Iſaiah lxvi. 23. *They ſhall go from* "*one new moon to another.* Though, under the goſpel, we have "not monthly feaſts and meetings as they had, yet the meetings "that we have are expreſſed thereby." From which he concludes, that "though Chriſt uſeth the ſame words to expreſs the inſtitu-"tion of the new churches of the goſpel by, yet it follows not

2dly, Though it could not be eſtabliſhed that there is a reference to the Jewiſh ſynagogues in this paſſage, it ſeems equally fair, and much more conſiſtent, to underſtand by the term church, the elders of the congregation, than the congregation itſelf.

Nothing is more common than to ſay that a thing is to be done to, or for a body, which is done only to, or by thoſe of that body who repreſent the whole, and to whom it is competent. And no phraſeology was more

" that it is of the ſame kind with the old, or that it runneth in " the ſame way." But to this it is anſwered, that this paſſage is *not here advanced as an argument for Preſbytery*, though it has been often brought forward with triumph, as an invincible argument in ſupport of *Independency*—that all that is maintained is ſimply this, That if we conſider the alluſion, if it proves any thing, as viewed in itſelf, and without going elſewhere to diſcover the conſtitution of the church, it is in favour of the former, and not of the latter, and conſequently that the argument which has ſo often been drawn from it for Independency neceſſarily falls. As we muſt have believed, from the paſſages produced from Goodwin, that there ſhould be *aliars*, and *new moons*, and *degrees of external puniſhment* among Chriſtians, the ſame with thoſe which we are aſſured exiſted among the Jews, unleſs it could be evinced from *other* paſſages, that a change was enjoined; ſo it is no leſs manifeſt from the preſent paſſage, that the government of the Chriſtian church, in the point here ſpecified, muſt reſemble that of the Jewiſh ſynagogue, by the name of which it is called, unleſs it can be demonſtrated from *other paſſages*, that it is appointed to be altered. And it will not ſuffice to eſtabliſh this idea, to inform us that the term church, when applied, as in this place, to a Chriſtian congregation, moſt commonly, in the New Teſtament, denotes the *whole* of the members as well as the rulers, ſince it is certain that it was underſtood in the ſame latitude of ſignification when applied alſo to a Jewiſh ſynagogue, and yet we know that when a complaint was told in *it* before the members at large, it was the rulers alone who judged reſpecting it. Granting therefore all that is deſired even by Independents, as to the proper import of the term church, or εκκλησια, no argument can be deduced from it in confirmation of their ſyſtem.

common among the Jews, than to ſay that a thing was done by a congregation, which was done only by the elders or rulers of that congregation. Thus, in the caſe of the manſlayer (Numb. xxxv. 24, 25.), it is ſaid, that "the *congregation* of the city to which the manſlayer and "the avenger of blood belonged, ſhould judge between "them. And that the *congregation* ſhould reſtore him "to the city of his refuge, whither he was fled; and "that he ſhould abide in it till the death of the high-"prieſt." Yet if Moſes may be allowed to explain his own words, even where this is ſo frequently aſcribed to the *congregation*, it was the *elders* of the city alone who performed it. "But if any man," ſays he (Deut xix. 11, 12.), "hate his neighbour, and lie in wait for him, "and riſe up againſt him, and ſmite him mortally that "he die, and fleeth into one of theſe cities, then the "*elders* of his city ſhall ſend, and fetch him thence, and "deliver him into the hands of the avenger of blood," (*i. e.* after judging him) "that he may die." Here we ſee that what is in one place repeatedly aſcribed to the congregation, is in the other aſſerted to be done only by the elders; and we are aſſured that it was the prerogative of the *elders alone*, agreeably to the divine appointment (Deut. xvi. 18.), to judge the people. In Joſh. xx. 4, 5. it is alſo ſaid, that "when the manſlayer "that doth flee into one of theſe cities, ſhall ſtand at "the entering of the gate of the city, and ſhall declare "his cauſe in the ears of *the elders* of the city *; and "they ſhall take him to the city unto them, and give him "a place that he may dwell among them. And if the "avenger of blood purſue after him, then they ſhall not "deliver the ſlayer into his hand; becauſe he ſmote

* The uſual judges who ſat in the gate; and who, if the city contained only a hundred and twenty families, amounted merely to three; and if it contained more, according to Joſephus, amounted to ſeven, and according to the Talmudiſts, to twenty-three.

" his neighbour unwittingly, and hated him not before " time." And yet it is ſubjoined, that " he ſhould " dwell in that city, until he ſtood before the *congregation* " *for judgment.*" Thus we perceive that while *the congregation* of the city *from* which he fled, are ſaid, in this paſſage, to have judged in the caſe of the manſlayer, in the preceding words we are told that the perſons in the city *to* which he eſcaped, who heard and decided upon his caſe, were *the elders;* and conſequently, as the government of every city was the ſame, it muſt have been the elders who were to hear and judge of his conduct in the city *from* which he came, while yet we are told that he was to ſtand before the *congregation.* Accordingly we find, from Philo, Joſephus, and other Jewiſh writers, that it was the elders alone, and not the people, who judged in their cities; and that the congregation, being conſidered as doing it by them, were ſaid *themſelves to have exerciſed the power of judgment*, though it was veſted in and exerciſed only by the elders. Agreeably to this, likewiſe, the Greek tranſlators, in their verſion of the Old Teſtament, render *kahal*, the ſtrongeſt Hebrew word denoting the congregation, in Prov. xxvi. 26. by συνεδριον, a *council or aſſembly of elders* *.

* It is the ſame word which is uſed in Luke xxii. 66. and Acts iv. 15. to ſignify the council of the high-prieſt, the elders, and the ſcribes. See alſo Paſor, who quotes Demoſthenes, according to the principle which has been now ſtated, as employing the word εκκλησια, the word rendered church in Matthew, and the term moſt frequently uſed in the Septuagint, even according to Independents, as the tranſlation of *kahal* or *congregation*, for an aſſembly of nobles who were rulers. " Εφοβευντο δε μη εξαιφνης " εκκλησια γενηται;" " Ubi accipi videtur (ſays he), pro concione " *magnatum* repente convocatorum," *i. e.* " It ſeems to denote here " an aſſembly of *nobles or rulers* ſuddenly convened." And ſee, too, the author of the Guide to Zion, p. 5. and Ainſworth, in his Counterpoiſon, p. 113. who, though very keen and very reſpectable ancient Independents, admitted that the word εκκλησια, here

Since then it is plain, from these as well as other passages in the Old Testament, that it was common for things to be represented as strongly as told to and judged of by *the congregation*, as what is mentioned in Matthew to be told to *the church*, while yet it is certain that it was only the elders of the congregation who were intended; is it not equally obvious, that when an offended Christian is there commanded to tell *the church* of the fault of his brother, even though there was no reference to the Jewish synagogue, that *it may be the elders of the church alone* who are designed, provided that it can be proved from other passages, that the government of the church is committed only to the former, as the government of each of the cities of Israel was committed only to the judges who sat in the gate*? But that the government of the church is vested only in the former, as the government of each of the cities of Israel was intrusted to the latter, has already been attempted to be demonstrated; and consequently it will no more follow, though an offence is commanded to be told to and judged of by the church, that every member is intended by the term church, than that because the manslayer was required

rendered *the church*, is used repeatedly by the Seventy for the sanhedrin, who undoubtedly were an assembly only of rulers.

* Chrysostom, one of the early fathers after Christ, who must certainly have been acquainted with what was at *that time* the constitution of the Christian church, evidently understood this passage, not in the sense of Independents, but in the sense which is at present attached to it by Presbyterians. As quoted by Zanchius, in Quart. Præcept. and by Junius, Contr. iii. lib. ii. cap. vi. in his exposition of this place in Matthew, he asserts, that by the *church*, to whom the offence was to be told, was intended the προεδροι και προϊστωτες, the presidents and rulers, who, as in 1 Thess. v. 12, 13. are always represented in the sacred volume, and are admitted even by Independents themselves, to be distinguished from the people, who are not allowed by them to be *nominal* governors.

to tell his cauſe before *the congregation* of any of the cities of Iſrael, and "even ſtand before *them* for judgment," every Iſraelite, who was a member of that congregation, was warranted, by the term *congregation*, to erect himſelf into a judge by the law of God.

Your argument, in fine, againſt *Preſbyteries* and *Synods*, and other courts of review, from their not being mentioned in this paſſage, though frequently urged alſo by other Independents, appears to be moſt inconcluſive. It is ſimply this, that becauſe a thing is not mentioned in *one* paſſage of ſcripture that treats of a particular ſubject, it is not to be found in *another* that relates to the ſame ſubject! But would not this, if followed out, lead us to ſet aſide important parts of almoſt every doctrine and inſtitution of Chriſtianity, few of which, we know, are fully contained in *one* paſſage, and moſt of which are to be collected completely only from different paſſages? Beſides, even granting that courts of review are not ſpecified, a very good reaſon ſeems to be ſuggeſted, from the paſſage itſelf, why they ſhould not at leaſt be *directly* mentioned. It is obvious that an appeal could only have been made to a ſuperior court, if *the brother who was offended* had not received juſtice from the court to which he at firſt applied; for it is *he alone* who is repreſented as bringing the matter before an eccleſiaſtical aſſembly for their determination. Such a caſe however is not here ſuppoſed; for it is expreſsly ſtated, that the *firſt* court to which he applied gave a deciſion in his favour. But if the *firſt* court, as has been ſaid, is here ſuppoſed to have given a deciſion in his favour; and if the *offending brother* is never ſaid to have thought himſelf aggrieved by the deciſion which this court paſſed againſt him; and, as is inſinuated, was even totally unſolicitous, and completely regardleſs, of bringing it before an eccleſiaſtical court at all; what propriety would there have been of introducing the poſſibility of an appeal to

a higher court? Thus, then, it appears that even *admitting* that such courts are not here mentioned, the omission is such as might naturally have been expected, and that no argument can be urged against them from this omission, if it can be proved upon that particular division of our subject, that they are clearly authorized by the word of God.

LETTER VII.

SIR,

You remark in the next place (p. 34. and 35.), that the principles of Independency seem to be established with equal decision in the fifth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. As you have not however even *hinted* at the *common* arguments deduced by Independents from this passage, for the right of *members* to judge in the church, though you endeavour to prove from it, that a congregation cannot be subjected *to the review of a Presbytery*, permit me, before I consider the inferences which you draw from it for the latter position, to state very briefly the arguments for the former, as mentioned by Mr. Cotton, an eminent ancient American Independent, in his book entitled, "The Keys of the King-"dom," p. 44. 45. 46. He tells us in the 1st place, That the reproof for not proceeding to a sentence against the incestuous person is directed to the whole as well as to the Presbytery. "They are all blamed for not "mourning," *&c.* 1 Cor. v. 2. 2dly, They are *all* commanded, when they are gathered together, to proceed against him. 1 Cor. v. 4, 5. "In the name of our "Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, "to deliver such an one unto Satan." And again, in ver. 13. "Therefore put away from among yourselves

" that wicked perſon." In the 3d place, He declares this act of theirs, in putting him away, to be a *judicial* act; for, ſays he (ver 12.), " do not ye judge them that " are within ?" And 4thly, Upon his exhibiting evidence of his repentance, the Apoſtle enjoins the brethren at large, as well as the elders, to forgive him: 2 Cor. ii. 4.—10. This, I believe, you will allow to be as able a ſtatement of the arguments of Independents, which are drawn from this paſſage, as is any where to be found; and I confeſs that I conſider it as much more plauſible than any thing I have met with in Goodwin, Owen, Glaſs, or any other Independent. Even theſe however I can by no means admit to be valid arguments in ſupport of this ſcheme, unleſs it could be eſtabliſhed, *independently of them*, from *other* paſſages *; and contend that while the paſſages which have been already produced in favour of Preſbytery ſeem totally inexplicable on any other ſcheme, this paſſage, as well as that which was laſt mentioned, ſeems to be equally explicable upon the principles of Preſbyterians as upon thoſe of Independents.

In confirmation of this general remark I obſerve, that when Paul reproves the whole of the Corinthians (1 Cor. v. 2.) " becauſe they had not mourned," he does not ſay that he blamed them becauſe they had not *all* exerciſed the power with which according to Independents they were inveſted, and *excommunicated him themſelves*, as judges or governors; but what ſtrongly indicates that they had no ſuch power—that, as the effect of this mourning, " he who had done this *might be* " *taken away* from among them." Now, though *all* the members are cenſured for not mourning, might not this cenſure be delivered to them upon the principles of

* Paſſages, I mean, which completely preponderate in clearneſs and cogency over thoſe which are urged for the Preſbyterian ſcheme, and paſſages which cannot be interpreted upon it.

Presbyterians, as well as upon those of Independents; for is it not the duty of the members, as well as of the rulers, though they do not judge, to mourn on account of the gross impurity of a Christian brother? And if the rulers neglect, as in this instance at Corinth, to mark their public disapprobation of his conduct, by inflicting upon him the merited punishment, is it not much more the duty of the members? Besides, when they are not commanded to mourn that *they themselves had not taken him away*, but simply that, as *the consequence of their sorrow*, stirring up their rulers to a sense of their duty, he might *be taken away from them*, is it not plain that this passage, instead of favouring the principles of Independency, seems fairly to establish the very opposite, and that the power of discipline is vested in the elders, and not in the members of the church?

Nor will the command of Paul to the Corinthians, "to deliver up the incestuous person to Satan when they "were gathered together, and to put away from among "themselves that wicked person," with his declaration that they had a power "to judge them who were "within," suffice to prove that the members at large exercised a similar power with those who were their rulers in administering the government of that Christian church. That they are *susceptible* of this interpretation, if viewed in themselves, and without attending to other passages of scripture, I readily grant—but not more so than those passages which assert that Christ is the propitiation for the sins not only of the Jews, but of *the whole world*, and that he gave himself a ransom for *all*, if considered merely in themselves, are susceptible of an explication which excludes the doctrine of *particular*, and establishes the Arminian doctrine of *universal* redemption. Now, if you would deny the inference deduced by Arminians from these latter passages in support of their system, by observing that these passages are no less susceptible of an

explication upon *Calviniſtic* than upon *Arminian* principles, while at the ſame time you produce a greater number of paſſages, ſtronger and more decided, which cannot be explained upon the principles of Arminians, is it not *equally* fair, if it can be proved that even the ſtrongeſt expreſſions in this place, deſcriptive of the power of the church of Corinth, can be explained *equally* upon the principles of Preſbyterians as upon thoſe of Independents, while at the ſame time a number of other paſſages can be adduced in favour of Preſbytery totally inexplicable upon the Independent plan—is it not *equally* fair, I ſay, to maintain that theſe expreſſions, in this place, no more eſtabliſh the principles of Independency, than the expreſſions in the other inſtance, which are *no leſs* energetic, eſtabliſh the principles of *univerſal redemption?*

Can ſuch expreſſions however as thoſe which are here uſed be equally explained upon the ſuppoſition of Preſbyterians, that it is the rulers of the church, and not the members at large, who are intended? Yes; for as was remarked, nothing is more common than to repreſent a thing as done by a body at large, while it is done only by thoſe in that body to whom it is competent. Thus we are informed in ſcripture, that the great *city* Rome reigned over the kings of the earth (Rev. xvii. 18.), while yet we know that the world was governed, at the period referred to, not by the *citizens of Rome*, but by the emperor and ſenate; and thus nothing is more frequent, both in ſpeech and writing, than to ſay that *the people of Great Britain* govern their American colonies, while it is only the king and parliament who thus govern them. Thus, too, we ſee that precepts are often addreſſed to bodies in general to be obſerved by them, which yet could be obſerved only with propriety by thoſe who were their rulers, while, at the ſame time, others are to fulfil, in their various ſpheres, what is perſonally required from

them. "If thy brother," said Moses to the people of Israel (Deut. xiii. 6. &c.), "the son of thy mother, or "thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, "or thy friend which is as thine own soul, entice thee "secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods— "(ver. 8.) thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken "unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither "shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him; but "thou shalt surely kill him." Now, who would imagine, from this command of Moses, that *the Israelites at large* were to kill any person who should entice them to idolatry, till he was previously tried and condemned by the judges upon the deposition of witnesses? And yet is it not obvious that this injunction is here addressed to *them at large*, as strongly and directly as the command is here addressed by Paul to the members at Corinth, to punish the incestuous person of whom he speaks? Is it not plain also, that every Israelite was *as much* authorized by these words of his lawgiver, viewed in themselves, to judge and put to death such an enticer to idolatry, as the Corinthians were authorized by these words of Paul, to judge and excommunicate their offending brother? And are not *the Jews in general* often reproved by the prophets (see Jer. v. 28. and vi. 5. &c.) for most flagrant violations of equity in the public administration of justice, as well as for other crimes, which could be committed only by their rulers? But who would imagine from this, that *every Israelite* was a *civil judge*, or that it was not *the rulers alone* who were responsible for these crimes; and that notwithstanding the general expressions which are employed, that the people were only accessary to the guilt, in as far as they approved of their conduct, and did not witness against it? Besides, is it not, notwithstanding, undeniable, that these passages as plainly and expressly enjoin *every Israelite* to administer public justice with

fidelity and impartiality *, as the Apoſtle tells the members of the church at Corinth, that they might judge them who were within their communion, and might put away from themſelves wicked perſons? And is it not manifeſt, that they as explicitly blame *the Iſraelites at large*, though they were not judges, for not adminiſtering juſtice in this manner, as that the Apoſtle blames the Corinthians *in general* for not putting away the inceſtuous perſon? If, then, while *the Iſraelites at large* are commanded to adminiſter public juſtice with fidelity and impartiality, it will not follow that *each* of them was authorized to be a civil judge, becauſe the power of judging appears, from *other paſſages*, to have been committed to thoſe who were appointed to be *rulers*; it will no more follow, that though the Corinthians are informed that they were to judge thoſe who were within their communion, that every Corinthian member was to be a judge, if it can be proved, as has been attempted, from *other* paſſages, that this power is veſted in the elders alone, and that every member is not entitled, either nominally or really, to the power of a ruler. And if, while *the Iſraelites in general* were blamed for not thus adminiſtering juſtice, it was the *rulers* alone, and not the people, who were intended, though the latter alſo were reprobated, ſo far as they acquieſced in their conduct, and did not teſtify againſt it; it is equally inconteſtable, that ſince, as we have endeavoured to demonſtrate, there are ſimilar rulers in every Chriſtian church, to whom the government is intruſted, though the Corinthians *at large* are cenſured

* See alſo Deut. xvi. 19. where after it had been mentioned in the preceding verſe, that judges were to be appointed in the gates of every city, who alone were to judge the people, it is ſaid notwithſtanding to *every Iſraelite*, "Thou ſhalt not wreſt judgment, "thou ſhalt not reſpect perſons, neither take a gift: for a gift "doth blind the eyes of the wiſe, and pervert the words of the "righteous."

for not excommunicating the offender, it was *the rulers alone* who were referred to by the Apoſtle, and that no argument of courſe can be deduced from this paſſage for the right of the members, in common with the miniſters, to adminiſter the affairs of the church of God *.

Thus even though it were granted, that the inceſtuous perſon was to be delivered over to Satan when *the whole of the members were met together*, it will not follow that *every one* of them, in a judicial capacity, was ſo to deliver him up, but only the rulers; for it has been contended even by many Preſbyterians, with Cyprian of old, that whatever is done, ſhould be done in the preſence of all the members of the church for their ſatisfaction †. But

* From this reaſoning alſo, if valid and concluſive againſt the poſſibility of proving from theſe general expreſſions that the Corinthians nominally and oſtenſibly ruled as well as their elders, it is no leſs plain that it cannot be evinced from them that they judged and voted in any form, any more than it can be eſtabliſhed from the expreſſions employed reſpecting the Iſraelites, that their conſent and vote were neceſſary to be aſked before any ſentence could be paſſed by their civil judges.

† We know however, as will afterwards be noticed, that in the caſe of the reference of the church of Antioch to that at Jeruſalem, the apoſtles, and elders, and brethren, did not repair to Antioch to diſcuſs the matter in the hearing of theſe Chriſtians, and anſwer their objections; and we will attempt to ſhew, that it was not an extraordinary inſtance. And even your brother Mr. Ewing, who quotes with ſuch approbation (p. 83.) the words of Hales reſpecting the Synod of Dort, "That it went like a watch; the "main wheels of which, upon which the whole buſineſs turns, "are leaſt in ſight; for all things of moment were acted in pri-"vate ſeſſions; and what was done in public, was only for ſhew "and entertainment:" that man, I ſay, who quotes with ſuch approbation this ſneer at the ſecrecy of the proceedings of this Synod, himſelf contends, as was before obſerved, for a *ſimilar ſecrecy* in *ſome* of the deliberations in his church. "Every thing," he affirms, as was formerly remarked, "is not to be brought even "before an *Independent* church for general diſcuſſion, or for ob-"taining a public declaration of the mind of each member before

is it a neceſſary conſequence, that becauſe diſcipline was to be exerciſed *in the preſence* of all the members, *each of them* was to exerciſe it? Though the court of civil juſtice, in a particular town, may be held by the magiſtrates in

" the office-bearers ſhall preſume to put it in practice." He even aſſerts that to do ſo, " would deprive the church of the benefit of " *government*, and would endanger the cauſe of *truth* and of Chriſ- " tian *liberty*." He inſinuates of courſe, that *ſome* of the meetings and proceedings, even of *their* office-bearers, muſt be *private;* and even explicitly declares (p. 36. 37.), that " if any of their " members are offended by the deciſions of the office-bearers in " theſe *private* meetings, and cannot prevail with them to change " their opinion, they muſt ſeparate from the church." It ſeems, then, that even alſo in this gentleman's *Independent congregation*, while he ſmiles at the jeſt when uttered againſt Preſbyterians, *in a number of inſtances*, " the *office-bearers* are like a watch; *the* " *main wheels* of which, *upon which the whole buſineſs turns*, " are *leaſt in ſight;* for things, even of ſuch moment as that a " difference of ſentiment warrants ſeparation, are acted in *private* " *ſeſſions;* and the liberty of ſpeaking, at leaſt *upon them*, which is " granted to the members when they are announced in public, " after they have been determined by the office-bearers, is only " for *ſhew* and *entertainment*."

If he ſays, it is only in trivial matters, and matters which are obvious, that the office-bearers are allowed to deliberate and determine alone, without the preſence and concurrence of the members; it is anſwered, that they are matters, a difference of ſentiment upon which, by his own acknowledgment, warrants ſeparation, and authorizes Chriſtians, agreeably to the paſſage of ſcripture which he cites (2 Tim. iii. 5.), " to turn " away" from the communion of thoſe who hold them, and to diſſolve the moſt ſolemn and endearing relations. Is ſuch a ſeparation however to take place, which is often repreſented in the word of God as a thing ſo ſerious, and are ſuch relations to be diſſolved, which conſtitute an union ſo important and intimate, for things which are *obvious* and *trivial* in their nature? If ſo, how *light* and *inſignificant* indeed muſt ſeparation from a church appear to Independents who adopt his ſentiments, and how precarious and dangerous muſt be the ſituation of thoſe ſocieties where they are acted upon as a principle! Need we be ſurprized at thoſe fre-

the preſence of the inhabitants, who are invited perhaps to attend, does it follow that every inhabitant, though not officially a judge, is allowed either to ſpeak or vote upon the deciſions which are paſſed, before they are

quent ſucceſſive changes which appear in the conduct of ſome of their members, who are authorized by one of the moſt eminent and zealous of their miniſters, ſupported as he imagines by the command of ſcripture, to move from their communion upon *the leaſt* alteration in their ſentiments, and conſtitute a new church, which again muſt be broken down into innumerable fragments upon every new alteration, though trivial and unintereſting? Such privileges may perhaps be dignified by ſome with the name of *liberty*, but it is a liberty which ſeems to be more worthy of the name of *licentiouſneſs*. And however it may be ſuited to the diſpoſitions of thoſe who, from impatience of controul, cannot brook that their propoſals ſhould not uniformly be followed in the ſociety to which they belong, or from imaginary advancing perfection in knowledge, are continually changing in ſome degree their opinions, it appears to be little fitted to promote the honour or intereſt of religion, or to ſubſerve the advancement of practical godlineſs. Nothing undoubtedly more directly tends to deaden the influence of this principle in the heart, than the indulgence of a reſtleſs ſchiſmatic ſpirit, even for matters of *indifference*, for which theſe words of Mr. Ewing preſent ſuch toleration. And nothing evidently more infallibly leads to injure the cauſe of Chriſtianity in the world, than ſuch repeated changes of religious fellowſhip, and renunciations of ſo important and endearing relations for every trifle, to which the ſyſtem of this gentleman preſents ſuch encouragement.

If it be urged, that he does not recommend, but only permits, theſe ſeparations; it is anſwered, that he declares in the moſt decided terms (p. 37.), "that thoſe who cannot make their bre-"thren hear them in what they believe to be the doctrine of "ſcripture (*i. e.* by the ſuppoſition, even in trivial matters) "are at *perfect liberty*, as they are *in duty bound*, from ſuch bre-"thren to turn away: 2 Tim. iii. 5." And it is remarkable that the paſſage which he adduces for this ſeparation, even for theſe trivial differences, denotes a turning away from them, which is totally incompatible even with their participating occaſionally in the ſacrament of the ſupper with the men whom they thus leave.

adopted? Admitting, alſo, that all the Corinthians were to put away from themſelves this wicked perſon, it cannot be inferred that every member was to do ſo, either virtually or nominally, as an eccleſiaſtical judge, but, as

If it be alleged on the contrary, to ſave his honour, that it is matters of *importance* about which Mr. Ewing ſpeaks, and by difference of opinion upon which, he conſiders ſeparation as warrantable; it is replied, that ſuch an affirmation is completely oppoſite to the whole of his reaſoning in the two preceding pages, which avowedly refers only to things "trivial and obvious." And it diſcovers a very ſtriking inconſiſtency in this writer, who, while he profeſſes to be an *Independent*, and to tranſact all his buſineſs of ſuperior importance in the *preſence* of his members, and with their *vote* and *conſent*, aſſerts, according to this view, in the preſent paſſage, that the office-bearers *alone* are occaſionally to decide in private, and even upon points of the higheſt magnitude, and that nothing remains for the members, when they are laid before them in public, but compliance, or ſeparation!! Inſtead therefore of viewing him or his congregation as *Independents*, muſt they not more properly be conſidered as *ſtanding alone* amidſt the reſt of their brethren? And inſtead of being claſſed with the other Tabernacle Congregational ſocieties, ſince their principles are a mixture of *Independency* and *Preſbytery*, might they not more accurately be denominated the *New Preſbyterian Independent Church?*

The ſum, then, of theſe remarks is briefly this, that the matters of which he ſpeaks are either *trivial;* and conſequently it muſt be conſidered as one of the principles of his church, that *ſeparation* for *trifles*, however *inſignificant*, is *the duty of Chriſtians:* or the points to which he refers are *primary* and *important;* and of courſe it will follow, as he affirms, that the office-bearers are to decide reſpecting them, without allowing the members to be preſent, or to judge and vote; that while he avows himſelf an *Independent*, he is in fact a *Preſbyterian;* and that his people, who imagine themſelves poſſeſſed of the *pureſt congregational liberty*, are ſubject to all the power and authority of *Preſbytery*, which to you and your brethren appear ſo deſpotic.

In fine, it is remarkable that while there is nothing in Preſbytery to prevent the meetings of its eccleſiaſtical rulers from being as open to the hearing and attendance of the people as thoſe of Independents, and while even their moſt *private* meetings, even

has been already evinced, only the elders; while at the same time it was his duty, by every proper testimony of respectful acquiescence in the sentence of the latter, and by abstaining even from all unnecessary intercourse with the of-

upon the most delicate points, are open to all who have business in them, their proceedings commonly are much more public, for the examination of the world, than those of the latter. While not a single stranger of another denomination, and much less of the profane and irreligious of men, is permitted to be present during the discussions which take place in an Independent church, the consultations and discussions of a Presbytery, or Synod, or General Assembly, are concealed from none, but are conducted in the audience and under the scrutiny of all. Even their most inveterate enemies are admitted to hear them, and their determinations and reasonings are submitted to their keenest and closest investigation. Does not this *plan* then at least, whatever may be the occasional faults of its administrators, seem better fitted, in this view also, to secure *upright* and *impartial justice*, than that of Independency, where every thing is hid from the inspection of the world, and not a single witness of their transactions is admitted? If the failings and errors which are sometimes discovered in ecclesiastical courts by Presbyterian rulers are better known than those of Independents, does it not arise from the superior candour and publicity of their system? and were the deliberations and debates of Independent churches as open to our inspection, might we not witness in them also no less imperfection and impropriety? And upon the whole, while such is the openness and publicity of this plan, and while even its most private business, with the decision which has been formed upon it, must at least be announced in a public meeting, can we fail to be astonished at the assertion of Mr. Haldane (p. 72. of his Address), that "less "danger is to be apprehended in a political light, admitting "there were cause for any, from unconnected congregational "churches than from those called Episcopalian or Presbyterian. "In the one of these" says he, "a few individuals exercise the "whole *authority*" (so that it seems there is authority even among Independents); "in the other, it is vested in Sessions, which "generally are small secret meetings, Synods, and Presbyteries, "greater and lesser affiliated, and corresponding societies, under "one parent society, called a General Assembly." Is a body,

fender in common life *, in his private capacity, to confirm their deed. And though it ſhould be admitted moreover, that the "ſentence," as we are told, 2 Cor. ii. 6. "was "*inflicted* by many," it will not follow that it was *paſſed* by many, or all of them, for there is an eſſential diſtinction, in every government, between the *making* and the *infliction* of a ſentence. The former might be performed only by a *few* who were rulers, while the latter might be executed by all the members of the church, who were bound to concur with the elders, by inflicting the ſentence; and who were all, as we have ſaid, under an obligation to refuſe to have fellowſhip with him, that he might be aſhamed, and that others might fear.

Is it ſaid, in ſhort, that as *all* the Corinthians are commanded to forgive their offending brother (2 Cor. ii. 7.—10.), they muſt *all* have been rulers? It is replied, that this conſequence appears by no means to follow—but that all that can be deduced from it is this, that as they had all been offended by him in their *various ſtations*, ſo they were all to forgive him upon tokens of his repentance, and expreſs their forgiveneſs in a manner which was ſuited to *their ſituation* in the church. Thoſe who were rulers, and were offended by him in that capacity, were commanded *as ſuch* to forgive him, and reſtore him again to the privileges of their ſociety; and thoſe

the greater part of the meetings of whoſe rulers are free to the hearing and examination of all, and whoſe deliberations are only private, as in the beſt regulated civil authoritative courts, when the buſineſs requires it—is this body, I ſay, though governed by a gradual ſubordination of courts, a more ſtriking image of thoſe revolutionary clubs which once threatened the ſubverſion and deſtruction of our kingdom, than a body, almoſt *all* whoſe proceedings are conducted in ſecret, and where *nothing* in the deliberations of almoſt *any* of their courts is tranſacted in the preſence and hearing of the world?

* See, and conſult particularly, 1 Cor. v. 9. 11.

who were members, and had been offended by him *as such*, on account of the dishonour which he had done to God, were called *as such* to express their forgiveness, and restore him once more to the comforts and advantages of private fellowship. Thus it would appear, that neither from this in particular, nor from any other expression contained in this passage, we are warranted to conclude that the members at large, in common with the rulers, are entitled to govern the church of Christ.

LETTER VIII.

SIR,

IN proof of your opinion you farther affirm (p. 38.), that the people must be admitted to judge and vote, because, in the reference to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem from the church of Antioch, "they are represented as "*all* uniting in the decision that was formed on the "question appealed." Thus we are told, that "it "pleased the apostles and elders, with the *whole church*, "to send chosen men of their company to Antioch, with "Paul and Barnabas," *&c.*; and "that they wrote "letters by them after this manner: The apostles, and "elders, and *brethren*, send greeting unto the brethren "which are of the Gentiles in Antioch, and Syria, and "Cilicia." Let it be supposed for a moment, that the brethren, here mentioned, were not *the other* ministers who were then at Jerusalem besides the apostles and elders: if it be asserted that these members, *in any form*, voted and judged in the case referred to, while it seems to establish in one view, it completely subverts in another, the scheme for which it is urged. You argue against Presbyterians when they attempt to demonstrate from this passage, that one congregation, with its rulers, may

be subject to the rulers of a number of congregations met as a Presbytery, and tell them that this case was *extraordinary*. Mr. Ewing observes, in his Lecture, p. 77. that "*the miraculous gifts* of the Spirit were *very* "*generally* enjoyed in the church at Jerusalem;" and seems to insinuate from this, the propriety of their being admitted, in a particular view, as *ecclesiastical arbiters*, to *adopt* and *transmit* the judgment of the apostles and elders as their judgment. You yourself also affirm, that all who passed this decision were under this influence, though in different degrees: for while you represent the apostles, and elders, and brethren, "as united in mak-"ing it," you declare it to be *extraordinary*; adding, (p. 44.), "if it was not extraordinary, let us see to "what it will lead." But if the argument which is advanced by Presbyterians from this passage for a court of review, above the ministers or elders of a particular congregation, composed of the ministers of a number of congregations, seems to you inconclusive, because this assembly was inspired, and delivered an extraordinary inspired decision, must it not be equally inconclusive when urged by Independents for the right of the people to judge and vote in their religious assemblies? If the ministers and elders of different congregations now, who correspond to the elders associated with the apostles, are not to judge as a *Presbytery* in matters which relate to *another* congregation, because, though they determined along with them in the appeal from Antioch, the whole of them were guided by a miraculous energy, on what principle can it be proved that *the people* now are to judge and vote, because *the people* at Jerusalem judged and voted under the guidance of this extraordinary infallible energy? Is it alleged with Mr. Ewing (p. 78.), that though the apostles and elders were inspired, Presbyterians allow their ministers, whom they call their successors, though not inspired, to judge and rule, and why not allow the

members now to judge and vote, since they are the *successors* of those ancient members who sat and judged in this inspired assembly? We allow, that if it could be proved that this assembly was *inspired*, no argument would be urged by Presbyterians for the ministers and elders of a number of congregations deliberating, as an authoritative court of review, in any appeal which is made, as in the case here recorded, by a single church. It follows therefore, upon his own *principles* as well as those of *Presbyterians*, that since he and his brethren consider this assembly as composed of persons *supernaturally* qualified for the decision which they delivered, in no point of view are they entitled to conclude, from what they apprehend to be said of the *brethren* judging in this *extraordinary* meeting, and under this *miraculous influence*, that members *now*, upon *common* occasions, are warranted to judge in the church of God.

The argument, besides, adduced by you and Mr. Ewing, in common with Mr. Glass, for the right of the members to judge at present in the affairs of the church, from what is here said of the brethren at Jerusalem, if it prove any thing, proves undoubtedly *too much*. It demonstrates not merely their right to judge and vote in matters which relate to their *own*, but in those which concern even another congregation. But does not this contradict a first principle of Independency, that neither the members nor the rulers of *one* congregation have a right to interfere, even according to your own acknowledgment (p. 30.), and according to the favourite position of Glass which he so keenly defends *, with any *other* congregation under heaven? Besides, would not the subordination to which this argument leads, a subordination of a particular congregation, not merely, as Presbyterians maintain, to the ministers and lay-elders, the *wisest* and *most*

* See his Works, vol. i. p. 155.—202.

enlightened of a number of congregations, but to *the members indiſcriminately* of a ſiſter-congregation, be much more intolerable, even upon your own principles, than that for which the former contend? On the whole, whether this aſſembly was inſpired, or not inſpired, if it be aſſerted that the brethren muſt judge now becauſe they judged then, it will neceſſarily follow, not only that the brethren of one congregation may judge in matters which are to bind the brethren of another congregation, but that they may judge of them finally while the latter are not preſent, nor give their conſent. But does not this contradict alſo another Independent principle, as ſtated by you, p. 30. "That whatever is done by thoſe who are appointed to "rule, is carried on in the preſence of the general body, "and with their conſent?" And will it not completely oppoſe another favourite poſition of Glaſs, and Lockier, and other Independents, "That nothing can be binding "upon any ſociety where their acquieſcence and votes "have not previouſly been aſked and obtained?"

Or is it ſaid, that the aſſembly at Jeruſalem was not inſpired, and that the reference made to them was ſimply for *opinion* and *advice?* On this ſuppoſition, no *judicial power* at all was exerciſed, no act of *government* was performed by *any of them;* and conſequently, though it were admitted that the brethren at Jeruſalem were allowed, along with the apoſtles and elders, *to ſtate their opinion* upon the controverted points, no argument can be adduced from it for the right of the brethren at preſent to *govern* and *vote* in the church. *Governing* the church and *exerciſing diſcipline* are certainly very different from a *mere ſtatement of opinion* upon a controverted point, which either might be received or rejected. And if the apoſtles, and elders, and members, in the caſe before us, merely gave an advice, and ſtated an opinion (as is done by the occaſional aſſociations of your miniſters, while, as you declare, p. 31. 32. *&c.* it is not binding upon any

of your congregations), it will never follow that becauſe the brethren were permitted to do this, they are authorized to govern or exerciſe diſcipline. In no view then does any argument ſeem to be deducible from this paſſage, for the right of the people to judge and vote in matters which relate to the government and diſcipline of the church of Chriſt.

Again, ſuppoſing that this aſſembly at Jeruſalem was neither an extraordinary aſſembly, nor a meeting convened merely for delivering an advice, but, as will afterwards at leaſt be attempted to be proved, an *authoritative*, though an *uninſpired* eccleſiaſtical court, I do not ſee how any argument can be drawn from it for the right of the members to judge in the church. If ſo, it would follow, as has been already ſaid, that, like the brethren at Jeruſalem, the brethren now could exerciſe even an *authoritative power;* that they would be entitled likewiſe, like thoſe at Jeruſalem, to govern not only their own, but even *other* congregations; and that they would be warranted alſo authoritatively to govern theſe congregations, even when they were not preſent, and could not conſent to their deciſions; all of which ſuppoſitions are manifeſtly inconſiſtent with the declared principles of Independents. The truth therefore ſeems to be, according to the ſentiments of ſome Preſbyterians, that though the members at Jeruſalem expreſſed their *acquieſcence* in the deciſion of the apoſtles and elders (a circumſtance which could not fail to have uncommon weight upon the minds of the believing Jews at Antioch, as they muſt previouſly have been no leſs attached than themſelves to the diſtinguiſhing peculiarities of the law of Moſes), they by no means appear to have judged authoritatively, or even voted in the matter. It was to the apoſtles and elders alone, and not to the members, that the church at Antioch are ſaid to have referred their cauſe: Acts xv. 2. But if the members at Jeruſalem, who were greatly more

numerous than the apoſtles and elders, ſat in the court, and if the deciſion could have been carried only, according to the conſtitution of the Chriſtian church, if agreeable to a majority of them, then ſince, on account of their number, it muſt have been known at Antioch that it was they *alone principally* who were to fix the determination, the reference ſhould have been made *principally* to them. It is the apoſtles and elders, too, alone (ver. 6.) who are ſaid to have come together *to conſider the matter*. But if it was conſidered *by the brethren* as well as by them, and, as is witneſſed *at preſent* in *Independent* congregations, *could not be determined without their conſent*, how is it that they are not mentioned as conſtituting a part of that aſſembly which convened to deliberate on this intereſting reference. During the deliberation, moreover, it was only the apoſtles and elders, and not the brethren, who are ſaid to have ſpoken; and when the deciſion was made, and ſent away, it is called "the decrees, not "of the apoſtles, and elders, and brethren" (Acts xvi. 4.), as we muſt naturally have expected upon the principles of Independents, but "the decrees" merely "of the apoſtles and elders." This appears to be wholly inexplicable upon the ſcheme of thoſe Independents who ſuppoſe that this meeting was but an ordinary aſſembly, in which the private members ſat as well as the apoſtles and elders, and as they were allowed equally to expreſs their judgment and ſtate their vote, from their *ſuperior* number, muſt have had more influence than they in paſſing the determination.

It is indeed ſaid (Acts xv. 12.), that "all the multi-"tude kept ſilence, and gave audience to Barnabas and "Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had "wrought among the Gentiles by them." But allowing that by the multitude we are here to underſtand the private members, and not the body of the apoſtles and other miniſters, who certainly would conſtitute a very

numerous assembly, it cannot be demonstrated from their being said to have *kept silence* during the speeches of these ministers, that they had previously spoken and debated in this meeting. All that is necessarily suggested is, that during this wonderful narrative of facts, "they "were quiet, or held their peace from that noise or "murmuring" which is often witnessed in multitudes, and which, perhaps, might have been experienced during the *preceding* speeches; in other words, they listened attentively. Does it follow however, that because the attention of the audience was completely commanded, that the whole of the multitude, as well as the apostles and elders, had publicly spoken as judges upon this occasion? It is also said, that "it pleased the whole church, "as well as the apostles and elders (ver. 22.), to send "chosen men with their determination to Antioch." Admitting however, that by the whole church, or assembly (εκκλησια), is not intended the rest of *the office-bearers* who composed this meeting besides the apostles and elders, it deserves to be remarked, says the ingenious Mr. Muir, that what is here stated respecting the members, if it be the members who are meant, did not take place till the deliberation was finished, and the sentence was passed, which, as we have now seen, was performed entirely by the apostles and elders. The church, moreover, he adds, if we choose rather to retain this translation of the word, and intend by it the members, might well be said to be pleased with the measure, and to express their acquiescence, though they were not allowed, in any view, *judicially* to signify their mind respecting it. The apostles and elders might determine that two of the brethren should go up to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, to testify the acquiescence of the whole in the decision, and might call upon the multitude, as at the election of the deacons, to look out from among themselves two men for this purpose. Upon their complying with

the requeſt, and chooſing from among themſelves Judas and Silas, it might ſtrictly be ſaid that it *pleaſed* them as well as the apoſtles and elders, to ſend theſe brethren to the church at Antioch, while yet, agreeably to the hiſtory, they neither publicly judged nor voted in the matter. But the letters it may be ſaid, which were written to Antioch, were written in the name of the brethren as well as of the apoſtles and elders; and the whole of them are repreſented as ſaying to the church at Antioch (ver. 28.), that it ſeemed good to them as well as to the Holy Ghoſt, to lay upon them no greater burden than neceſſary things. It ſeems plain however, that it might be repreſented as pleaſing the members, if they be referred to, only ſo far as *acquieſcing* in the deciſion which was made by the apoſtles and elders, and not as themſelves joining judicially in the deliberation and determination; and that it is in this view that their names are inſerted in the letters. The reference was not made to them, and would they ever have preſumed to have judged in a cauſe in which they were not appealed to? They are never named among thoſe who came together to conſider the matter, and can we ſuppoſe that, if they did not meet either for deliberation or deciſion, they determined in this cauſe, either *virtually* or *oſtenſibly*, as eccleſiaſtical judges? Beſides, when the ſacred hiſtorian ſpeaks of the deciſion which was contained in theſe letters, and of the perſons who paſſed it as eccleſiaſtical judges, he affirms, as has been ſaid repeatedly, that it was pronounced only by the apoſtles and elders; chap. xvi. ver. 4. To make the hiſtorian therefore *conſiſtent with himſelf*, it is neceſſary to conſider him here as telling us, that the brethren merely acquieſced in what was done by the apoſtles and elders. Or if it be ſaid once more with Mr. Ewing *, that though the brethren did not at firſt

* See his Lecture, p. 77. near the foot.

judge in this appeal, yet they had the honour of *adopting* and *tranſmitting* the judgment of the apoſtles and elders as their judgment? It is anſwered, that if this amounted to any thing more than a mere declaration of their acquieſcence and approbation—if it contained in it any thing which can be conſidered as judicial, it is liable to all the objections we havt mentioned. It was a tranſmitting their judgment as eccleſiaſtical judges, in a caſe in which they were never *appealed to:* it was a judicial examination and deciſion of a matter which they are never even ſaid to have aſſembled with the apoſtles and elders *to conſider:* and it was a tranſmitting their judgment with all the authority of arbiters (if they too, as he affirms, p. 78. at the top, are among the perſons who declare that it ſeemed good to them *judicially* to *lay upon the diſciples at Antioch* neceſſary burdens), while, even upon this gentleman's principles, and thoſe of every Independent, they were *not entitled* to lay upon them *any* burden; and while, as has been ſtated, in the account afterwards delivered of thoſe who then judged, and laid this burden upon the diſciples, their name is never mentioned. How could the brethren of *one* congregation *lay judicially* any neceſſary burdens upon the brethren of *another* congregation, call it an adopting or tranſmitting the judgment of the apoſtles and elders, or what you pleaſe? Or if it was not an *oſtenſible judicial* power, but ſimply of the kind which is claimed *by the members of an Independent congregation* that is ſuppoſed to have been exerciſed by theſe members at Jeruſalem, *upon what ground*, and I *requeſt it to be particularly conſidered*, could they exerciſe even *this* over the members at Antioch? Is it conſiſtent with the diſtinguiſhing principles of Independents, to allow to the members of *one* of their churches the ſame power of judging over the members of *another*, by *whatever name* you call it, which is uniformly exerted by them before any thing can be paſſed in their *own* ſociety?

But if it be repugnant even to the principles of *Independents themſelves*, to grant to the members of *one* congregation *the ſame power of judging* as to the affairs of *another* which they aſſume in their own, upon what ground can they affirm that a power merely of this kind, though *nominally inferior* to that of the miniſters, was exerciſed by the members of the church at Jeruſalem, though aſſociated with the apoſtles and elders, over the members at Antioch? On the whole it may be remarked, that as Mr. Ewing admits (p. 77.) that from this deciſion of the apoſtles there was no *diſſent* or *appeal*, even though it ſhould be granted that the brethren were allowed to adopt and tranſmit to the church at Antioch *their* judgment as their own, it ſeems impoſſible to eſtabliſh from it the right of the brethren not only to adopt, if they are pleaſed, but, as is frequently witneſſed, to *reject* and *nullify*, if they are diſſatisfied, the deciſions of their office-bearers. Becauſe they were permitted, in *one* inſtance, to teſtify their approbation of the determination of their rulers, and adopt, as their judgment, a judgment from which they could neither *diſſent* nor *appeal*, will it ever follow that if they are not pleaſed with a deciſion or propoſal of their rulers, they have power to ſet it aſide, and bring forward another, however contrary to the mind of the former?

On a review, then, of this as well as the preceding paſſages, on which your ſcheme is founded, it does not appear that we are warranted by them to believe that the members of the church, in every deliberation, are to expreſs their judgment, and ſtate their vote; while, from the various arguments which were adduced before, it ſeems neceſſarily to follow that the elders alone, without the conſent and judgment of the people, are authorized to govern the church of God.

APPENDIX TO LETTER VIII.

WHATEVER may be the declarations of ſcripture with regard to this matter, it has been urged by Independents with the utmoſt confidence, that eccleſiaſtical antiquity univerſally affirms that ſuch privileges were granted to the Chriſtian people in the primitive church. Mr. Ewing, in particular, has quoted with approbation King's Inquiry into the Primitive Church, as ſupporting his opinion, "that the largeſt churches, in the third "century, were only ſingle congregations;" and Glaſs has adduced the authority of Cyprian, to ſhew that, at that period, every thing was done according to the determination of the people. But admitting that theſe aſſertions could not be diſproved, it might be ſufficient to reply to them in the very decided expreſſions of the firſt of theſe writers, reſpecting the validity of arguments deduced from antiquity againſt the doctrine of Lay-preaching. "Mr. Dick," ſays he, in his Remarks upon a Sermon in Refutation of Lay-preaching, "confirms his "argument," to uſe Mr. Ewing's own *dignified ſatire*, "by ſome *anecdotes* taken from eccleſiaſtical hiſtory. As "my Bible ſtops at the end of the book of the Revelation, "*I am not very careful to anſwer in theſe matters.*" Why then, if the word of God be perfect, and fitted to furniſh us thoroughly for every good work, ſhould Independents wiſh that Preſbyterians ſhould be careful to anſwer *them* in *this* matter, even allowing that they could demonſtrate that in the primitive churches, it was by the vote of the people that every meaſure was adopted or rejected? Beſides, we are certain from the ſacred oracles, as well as the earlieſt eccleſiaſtical writers, that many flagrant errors were admitted in the church, both in the days of the apoſtles, and in the period which immediately ſucceed-

ed their death *. To prove that a thing is lawful or proper, it is not sufficient to tell us, that it was very generally practised by the church in the primitive ages, but it must be shewn to be agreeable to the word of God. To this standard we are to bring their *practices* as well as their doctrines; and by it alone, notwithstanding their proximity to the apostles in point of time, are to decide whether what was admitted and followed by them should be adopted and imitated, or rejected and set aside.

Even when we examine the remains of ecclesiastical antiquity on the point in question, to ascertain, not what should be followed as an *infallible* example, but what was then acknowledged as the constitution of the church, there are various considerations which demand our attention. 1st, It is probable that in different churches, the government, as well as worship and ceremonies, were different. Accordingly, we find that some of the early fathers ascribe to the people a greater, and some of them a

* See Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, *&c.*—It is remarkable also, that most of the testimonies produced by King, for the power which Independents would give to the people, are taken from Cyprian, a father who flourished in the third century. But, says an Independent (Liverpool Theological Repository. vol. iv. p. 306.), when he would invalidate the evidence adduced by King, from ecclesiastical antiquity, for Presbyterian Synods, "All the instances "of them, which Lord King produces, are in *the third* century, "and therefore within a time when infant-communion, conse- "cration of elements, use of chrism, sign of the cross, and other "errors in doctrine and discipline, had entered into, and obtained "a footing in the church of Christ." Now, if this circumstance appear to Independents in general to destroy the force of the argument which is brought from the writings of Cyprian for *Presbyterian Synods*, must it not equally destroy *the strongest* and *most numerous arguments* of Independents from ecclesiastical antiquity, which are founded on the sense which they attach to certain passages collected from the writings of the same ancient father?

fmaller portion of power. 2dly, As the clergy, when afterwards raiſed, by the extravagant and imprudent liberality of Conſtantine, to a dignity and grandeur like that of ſecular princes, infringed the rights and privileges of the people, ſo, in the preceding ages, when the governors of the church were ſo entirely dependent upon the caprices of the people, they might experience it to be requiſite to recede in ſome meaſure from their legitimate rights, and grant to the people a degree of power to which they were not entitled. Allowing, then, that Independents could prove that the fathers granted to the people, in many of their churches, a degree of power as great as that for which they now contend, it is evident that on their own principles, as well as what has now been ſtated, no argument can be advanced from it for a ſimilar power to Chriſtian members in the preſent day. It muſt previouſly be proved that the clergy were not induced to grant them this power from conſiderations, perhaps, of a falſe and reprehenſible prudence; and that, if they acted from conviction, their ſentiments, upon this head, are not to be numbered among their errors, but, as they are confirmed by ſcripture, are to be reckoned among their excellencies, and to be regarded by us as patterns for our imitation.

That theſe paſſages moreover produced by King, from a few of the fathers, will warrant the concluſion which he wiſhes to draw from them, is by no means evident. In his very firſt authority, from Clemens Romanus (p. 116.), he takes it for granted, that the term πλῆθος denotes the members, when, as will afterwards be proved, it is frequently applied only to the rulers of the church; and if it ſignify the members, he forgets to ſhew that what they are here affirmed by Clemens to perform, might not be performed by them by means of their office-bearers. His ſecond authority, from Origen, repreſents a criminal as appearing before a congrega-

tion, but says not a word of his being judged by them. And even the strongest expression adduced from Cyprian respecting the power of the people, seems to be too dubious and obscure to authorize any certain conclusion as to the constitution of that Christian church. "Ad id "vera (says that father, Epist. v. p. 12. edit. Rigalt.) "quod scripserunt mihi compresbyteri nostri Donatus et "Fortunatus, Novatus et Gordius, solus rescribere nihil "potui; quando a primordio episcopatus mei statuerim, "nihil sine consilio vestro, et sinu consensu plebis, mea "privatim sententia gerere." Now, as it is impossible from the Epistle to discover the particular nature of the business of which Cyprian speaks, it seems unfair in King to build upon the expressions which he employs respecting it a conclusion so general, as that, in *every* business, nothing was done by Cyprian without previously obtaining the consent of the people. Gulartius and Junius, whose authority unquestionably as judges of the constitution of the primitive church stands very high, inform us, in their Notes on this passage, that Cyprian probably refers to an ordination, and that all that he says is merely that he never did any thing *of that kind* without the advice of his fellow-presbyters, and the consent of the people. "Nempe agebatur de aliqua electione quam "Cypriano quidam e Presbyterio suggesserant, eo quod "ecclesia ex persecutionibus, parte sui Presbyterii destitu-"ta esset. Respondet nihil se in *hac* causa unquam facere "voluisse quin et Presbyterii consilium et plebis consensum "adhiberet." But what though the people are here declared by Cyprian (and the supposition is as natural as any which can be adopted) to have a right to be consulted, as to their opinion and consent, before a minister is ordained; and what though it is asserted by this father, that he did nothing of *this* kind without thus consulting them; will that demonstrate, as King very roundly affirms (p. 106.), "that *all things* relating to the government

" and policy of the church were performed by the joint " conſent and adminiſtrations of the clergy and people."

The aſſertion of King (p. 121.) that Cyprian writes, that " whoever was excommunicated, it was by *the divine* " *ſuffrages of* the people" (Epiſt. xl. ad Plebem), ſeems to be equally raſh and unfounded. Cyprian indeed ſpeaks of the ſeparation of five ſchiſmatic preſbyters from the church of Carthage, who, attaching themſelves to the faction of Feliciſſimus, had oppoſed the miniſtry of this venerable father, and even queſtioned his right to diſcharge his function. So far however is Cyprian from affirming that theſe preſbyters had been excommunicated by the votes of the people, that he tells us expreſsly *they were excommunicated by none*, neither *people* nor *office-bearers*, but had voluntarily inflicted upon themſelves the puniſhment which they deſerved, and *expelled themſelves* from the communion of the church. " Et quidem de Dei " providentia (ſays he, p. 58.) nobis hoc nec volen- " tibus nec optantibus, immo et ignoſcentibus et tacen- " tibus, pœnas quas meruerant rependerunt, ut *a nobis* " *non ejecti ultro ſe ejicerent*, ipſi in ſe pro conſcientia ſua " ſententiam darent, ſecundum veſtra divina ſuffragia " conjurati et ſcelerati de eccleſia *ſponte ſe pellerent.*" Mention is indeed made of the votes of the people; and it is intimated, that theſe perſons were *conjurati et ſcelerati*, or wicked men and conſpirators, according to their votes. It does not appear however, that theſe votes had been given by an aſſembly of the people met judicially, as eccleſiaſtical governors, to conſider their conduct. Had ſuch an aſſembly been called, and ſuch a ſentence pronounced, it is difficult to conceive how theſe men would have been permitted to remain in the communion of the church, and to officiate as miniſters. Such a determination, if pronounced by the members together with their office-bearers, as thoſe who were over theſe preſbyters in the Lord, neceſſarily involved in it an excluſion at

at once from their privileges as members, and their function as miniſters; and ſince no ſuch puniſhment was inflicted upon them, though they were declared by theſe votes to be wicked and conſpirators, it is moſt probable that the votes were not delivered by the people as an aſſembly of eccleſiaſtical arbiters convened to judge and puniſh theſe offenders, but as met in a different character, and for a different purpoſe. But in what character, it may be aſked, had the people met when they delivered theſe votes, and for what purpoſe was it requiſite that they ſhould vote at all? We anſwer, that theſe favourers of Feliciſſimus had endeavoured to alienate the minds of his congregation from the miniſtry of Cyprian, and had prompted them publicly to reject his authority, and no longer acknowledge him as a Chriſtian biſhop. "Hi (ſays that father) fomenta olim quibuſdam confeſſoribus et hortamenta tribuebant, ne *concordarent cum epiſcopo ſuo*, nec eccleſiaſticam diſciplinam cum fide et quiete juxta præcepta Dominica continerent, ne confeſſionis ſuæ gloriam incorrupta et immaculata converſatione ſervarent." And again, "Ac ne parum fuiſſet corrupiſſe quorumdam confeſſorum mentes, et *contra ſacerdotium Dei* portionem ruptæ fraternitatis *armare voluiſſe*." In conſequence however of the attempts of theſe men to miſlead and ſeduce them, it is likely that the people would aſſemble in a body, to conſider whether they would adhere to the miniſtry of their paſtor, or connect themſelves with the friends and followers of Feliciſſimus. On this occaſion a vote would be taken, and the deciſion being in favour of Cyprian, they neceſſarily declared the oppoſite party to be *conjurati et ſcelerati*, "wicked men and conſpirators." Still however, in the whole of this proceeding, they did not act as the eccleſiaſtical judges and overſeers of theſe preſbyters, and much leſs, as King has ventured to affirm, did they excommunicate them by their votes. Even after

the determination which was made by the votes of the members, when met in a private capacity, they ſtill retained their function as elders; and conſequently no argument can be drawn from this paſſage, to ſhew that when offenders were judicially expelled from the ancient church, it was by the vote of the members as well as of the office-bearers.

Even though it were conceded that the members of the church were allowed, for their ſatisfaction, to be preſent at the deliberations of the miniſters and office-bearers, and were occaſionally perhaps admitted to expreſs their concurrence, it does not appear that every thing was ſubmitted to their judgment and vote, as well as to the judgment and vote of the overſeers, before it was finally adopted. On the contrary, it is declared by Clemens Romanus, one of the earlieſt fathers, in his Firſt Epiſtle to the Corinthians, who had rebelled againſt their office-bearers, that the government of the church was veſted in the latter. "Let us, my brethren," ſays he, "look to ſoldiers who fight under their officers. "With what regularity, meekneſs, and ſubmiſſion, they "execute their orders. All are not pretors, nor rulers "of thouſands, or of hundreds, fifties, or ſmaller com-"panies: but every one, in his own rank, does what is "commanded by the king and the rulers. The high "cannot ſubſiſt without the low, nor the low without "the high: There is a certain variety, and it proves "beneficial.——

"Ye then," adds he, "who have laid the foundation "of this inſurrection, return to the obedience of your "preſbyters, and bending the knees of your heart, be "inſtructed to repentance. Laying aſide the haughty "arrogance of your tongues, learn *ſubjection:* for it is "better with a good reputation to be eſteemed little "in the flock of Chriſt, than appearing more eminent "in our own eyes, to be deprived of that hope which

" he hath given us *." If every member, however, in the church of Chriſt, according to the opinion of this ancient father, was no more to be a ruler than every ſoldier in an army was to be a pretor, or commander of thouſands, or hundreds, or fifties, or tens, in his view muſt it not have been in the higheſt degree reprehenſible to grant to the people an equality of power with their miniſters or office-bearers, the point of preſidency alone excepted? And if he enjoins the whole of the members to be ſubject to their miniſters with the ſame *meekneſs and ſubmiſſion* which are diſcovered by *ſoldiers* to thoſe who are *their officers*, is it not obvious that in his time, or in his church at leaſt, every meaſure muſt not have been ſubmitted to their vote as much as to that of the office-bearers? Here then ſeems to be one pointed and deciſive teſtimony from a father, whoſe antiquity and high reſpectability entitle him unqueſtionably to the greateſt regard, completely contradictory to the aſſertions of Independents. In his days undoubtedly (and he lived immediately after the apoſtles of Chriſt) the people cannot have enjoyed the ſame authority in eccleſiaſtical government as their paſtors and elders, or his reaſoning would have been inappoſite and inconcluſive. Nay, had they poſſeſſed ſuch power in all other congregations, though refuſed it in his, his argument would ſtill have been weak and nugatory; for it might have been replied by the Corinthians, that though the members of his church were obliged to be ſubject to their ſpiritual overſeers as ſoldiers are to their officers, yet the appointment of Chriſt, and the practice of every other primitive church, warranted them to claim an equality of power, in judging and voting upon every meaſure, with their miniſters and elders. But as we cannot ſuppoſe that ſuch an argument

* See Mr. Robertſon's Reply to Mr. Ewing's Animadverſions on his Attack upon Lay-preaching, p. 21. and 23.

would have been uſed by Clemens, had he known that this univerſally was the conſtitution of the church, it naturally follows, that, at that period at leaſt, the people muſt have been ſtrangers to that degree of power which Independents contend ſhould now be granted to them in eccleſiaſtical government.

Jerome alſo, who was not long poſterior to Clemens, exhibits a teſtimony no leſs ſtrong and explicit againſt Independency, in his Remarks upon Titus, chap. i. "Antequam (ſays he) diaboli inſtinctu, ſtudia in religione fierent, et diceretur in populo, ego ſum Pauli, ego Apollo, ego vero Cephæ, communi preſbyterorum conſilio eccleſiæ gubernabantur," *&c.; i. e.* "Before, through the ſuggeſtion of the devil, factions aroſe in religion, and it was ſaid among the people, I am of Paul, I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, the churches *were governed* by a common council of preſbyters." Upon which the learned Chamier, in his Treatiſe de Œcumen. Pontif. lib. x. cap. v. ſect. xxii. in reply to Bellarmine, remarks, "Reſpondeo ad primum etiamſi ariſtocratia non ſit totidem ſyllabis nominata, tamen certo ſignificatam his verbis communi preſbyterorum conſilio eccleſiæ gubernabantur," *&c.* And ſubjoins, "Bonam autem fuiſſe id regiminis formam, inde ſequitur, quod *ab initio* fuiſſe dicat (Hieronymus) cum in eccleſia id ſit optimum quod veriſſimum, id autem veriſſimum quod *primum*:—Dicit enim (Hieron.) fuiſſe ex *inſtitutionis Dominicæ* veritate." But if, as is juſtly obſerved by Chamier, we are inſtructed by this father, that *in the apoſtolic times*, and *in the ages which immediately ſucceeded that period*, the churches were governed, agreeably to the injunction of Chriſt himſelf, by a council of preſbyters, is it not obvious that originally the people cannot have been admitted to parity of power, in every congregation, with their elders and office-bearers? Had it univerſally been the practice of the New-Teſta-

ment churches, and of the congregations at large in every country which were afterwards formed, to allow their members to judge and vote upon every cauſe; nay, as the members were more numerous, had it generally been known that every Chriſtian ſociety was more really governed by the former than by the latter; how could Jerome err ſo egregiouſly in a matter of fact, and aſſert, in oppoſition to the knowledge of all, and at the riſk of inſtant and univerſal contradiction, that, till factions had begun to ariſe in the church, every congregation was governed by a council of elders? It would appear then, from this clear and ſtriking declaration of one who, from antiquity and ſuperior information, was eminently qualified to judge upon this ſubject, that, in the apoſtolic times as well as the ſubſequent ages, the people were not permitted to vote and determine in eccleſiaſtical matters, but that the churches were adminiſtered, as at preſent among Preſbyterians, by a council of office-bearers.

To theſe quotations might be added the words of Ignatius, an apoſtolic father (Epiſt. ad Trallianos, edit. Oxon. p. 66.), who calls the preſbyters or elders of his times, the συνεδριον Θεου, or the ſanhedrin or council of God: "Οι δε πρεσβυτεροι ὡς συνεδριον Θεου," &c. But upon what ground could he diſtinguiſh them by the name of the ſanhedrin, the common appellation of the Jewiſh eccleſiaſtical judicial court, if they did not conſtitute a correſponding court in the Chriſtian church? With this, too, might be mentioned the words of Origen, who, in his Seventh Homily upon Joſhua, orders "one who "had been thrice admoniſhed, and was unwilling to re-"pent, to be cut off from the church by its preſidents "or elders:—Tertio admonitum reſipiſcere nolentem "jubet ab eccleſiæ corpore deſecari, per eccleſiæ præ-"ſides." And to this might be ſubjoined the declaration of the authors of the Magdeburgen. Centuriæ, a work of the higheſt credit and authority for its accurate

repreſentations of eccleſiaſtical antiquity: "Jus (ſay "they, Cent. iii. cap. vii. p 151.) tractandi de excom- "municandis, aut recipiendis publice lapſis, penes ſeni- "ores eccleſiæ erat;" *i. e.* "The right of deciding re- "ſpecting ſuch as were to be excommunicated, or of "receiving, upon their repentance, ſuch as had fallen "from the profeſſion of Chriſtianity, was veſted *in the* "*elders of the church*:" and, in proof of this, they refer us to Tertullian's Apology. They indeed remark (Cent. ii. cap. vii. p. 134.), "Ceterum ſi quis probatos autores "hujus ſeculi perſpiciat, videbit formam gubernationis "propemodum Δημοκρατιας ſimilem fuiſſe;" but, in the following words, they ſufficiently explain their meaning: "Singulæ enim eccleſiæ (ſay they) *parem* habebant "*poteſtatem* verbum Dei pure docendi, ſacramenta admi- "niſtrandi, abſolvendi et excommunicandi hæreticos et "ſceleratos, et ceremonias ab apoſtolis acceptas exer- "cendi, aut etiam pro ratione ædificationis novas con- "dendi, miniſtros eligendi, vocandi, ordinandi, et juſtiſ- "ſimas ob cauſas iterum deponendi." From this it is evident, that though, in the former ſentence, they had ſaid that the government of the Chriſtian church, in the ſecond century, was almoſt like a democracy, they intended only that it reſembled it in this individual circumſtance, that all its congregations had an equality of power; and, as Wood obſerves, p. 383, "that no par- "ticular church was to have any authoritative and juri- "dical ſuperiority over other particular churches, as the "Prelaticall men pleaded for authoritative ſuperioritie "in their cathedrall churches, over all particular churches "in the diæceſe, and the Papalins for an univerſall "ſuperioritie and ſupremacie in the church of Rome, "over all other churches in the world." "Beſides," as he adds, "it is to be obſerved that among other things "which they reckon up as parts of the church-govern- "ment, which they ſay was much like democracie, they

" put in the preaching of the word, and adminiſtration " of ſacraments, which themſelves before ſay (and no " man of ſound judgment will deny) are acts proper to " the called miniſters of Chriſt: Whence alſo, it is " manifeſt that they mean not a democracie properly ſo " called, which putteth the formall power and exerciſe " of government in the hands of all and every one " of the multitude, which the Independent brethren " plead for."

On the whole, even Cyprian, whom Independents have ſo frequently repreſented as affirming that the government of the church was purely popular, uſes expreſſions by no means conſiſtent with ſuch a ſuppoſition. He tells us for inſtance, in his Epiſtle to Quintus, de Hæreticis Baptizandis, p. 140. that the perſons who "*governed* the " church of the Lord in the province of Africa and " Numidia, at the period to which he refers, were " Agrippinus, a man of worthy memory, and his fellow " biſhops or miniſters. Quod quidem et Agrippinus, " bonæ memoriæ vir, cum cæteris coepiſcopis ejus, qui " illo tempore in provincia Africæ et Numidiæ eccleſiam " Domini *gubernabant*, ſtatuit, et librato conſilii commu- " nis examine firmavit." That the power of ordination alſo, that moſt important act of eccleſiaſtical government, was intruſted only with the miniſters, in the days of this father, is no leſs evident. In his Fifty-ſecond Epiſtle, for example, while he ſays that Cornelius was choſen to be a biſhop by the vote of the people, he declares moſt expreſsly, that he was ordained only by the miniſters or clergy. " Et factus eſt (ſays he, p. 75.) epiſcopus a " plurimis collegis noſtris qui tunc in urbe Roma aderant " qui ad nos literas honorificas, et laudabiles, et teſtimonio " ſuæ prædicationis illuſtres de ejus ordinatione miſerunt. " Factus eſt autem Cornelius epiſcopus de Dei et Chriſti " ejus judicio, de clericorum pene omnium teſtimonio, " de plebis, quæ tunc affuit ſuffragio, et de ſacerdotium

" et bonorum virorum collegio *;" *i. e.* in fubſtance, " He was made a biſhop by many of my colleagues who " were then in Rome, according to the judgment of " God and Chriſt, the teſtimony of almoſt all the clergy- " men (who belonged to that church), the vote of the " people who were then preſent, and the college of " ancient prieſts and worthy men." And he ſays of Novatian (p. 81.), that " he was made a biſhop by " ſixteen of his fellow miniſters or biſhops." " Niſi ſi " epiſcopus tibi videtur, qui epiſcopo in eccleſia a ſe- " decim coepiſcopis facto, adulteratque extraneus epiſco- " pus fieri a deſertoribus per ambitum nititur." Not only, moreover, were they the only perſons who communicated ordination, but they alone determined every thing relating to the conduct and duties of the clergy after they had been inveſted with their office. Hence Cyprian, in his Sixty-ſixth Epiſtle, p. 126. reprobates one Victor, becauſe, in oppoſition to the decrees of a council of miniſters, he had appointed Fauſtinus, a preſbyter of the church, one of the truſtees of his teſtament. " Gra- " viter commoti ſumus ego et collegæ mei qui præſentes " aderant, et compreſbyteri noſtri qui nobis aſſidebant, " fratres chariſſimi, cum cognoviſſemus quod Geminius

* See alſo Epiſt. lxxv. p. 159. " Sed et cæteri quique hæretici, " ſi ſe ab eccleſia Dei ſciderint, nihil habere poteſtatis aut gratiæ " poſſunt, quando omnis poteſtas et gratia in eccleſia conſtituta " ſit, ubi præſident majores natu, qui et baptizandi et manum " imponendi et ordinandi poſſident poteſtatem;" *i. e.* " But the " other heretics alſo, if they ſeparate from the church, can have " no power or grace, ſince all power and grace are placed in the " church, where elders preſide, in whom is veſted the power of " baptizing, and impoſition of hands and *ordination*." And it is obvious that theſe elders muſt have been the miniſters of the church, and not merely laymen advanced in age, for they are ſaid alſo to *baptize* as well as ordain, and none we know could perform that act, but ſuch as were recognized as office-bearers or preſbyters.

" Victor, frater noſter de ſeculo excedens, Geminium
" Fauſtinum preſbyterum tutorem teſtamento ſuo nomi-
" naverit, cum jam pridem *in concilio epiſcoporum ſtatutum*
" *ſit*, ne quis de clericis et Dei miniſtris tutorem vel
" curatorem teſtamento ſuo conſtituat—quando ſinguli
" divino ſacerdotio honorati, et in clerico miniſterio
" conſtituti, non niſi altari et ſacrificiis deſervire, et
" precibus atque orationibus vacare debeant." And again, " Quod epiſcopi anteceſſores noſtri, religioſe con-
" ſiderantes, et ſalubriter providentes, cenſuerunt ne quis
" frater excedens ad tutelam vel curam clericum nomi-
" naret; ac ſi quis hoc feciſſet, non offerretur pro eo,
" nec ſacrificium pro dormitione ejus celebraretur." But if an aſſembly of miniſters alone decided in this inſtance of clerical duty, and even, as is aſſerted in theſe paſſages, appointed a preciſe and particular puniſhment to be inflicted upon any one who diſregarded their decree, is it not obvious that in all other points which reſpected the conduct of the office-bearers of the church, it muſt have been they alone alſo who were permitted authoritatively to judge and determine. In ſhort, we find that when a miniſter acted unworthily of his office, it was miniſters alone who were authorized to be his judges. Thus when Novatian, after his apoſtaſy, entreated to be admitted into the communion of the different churches of Africa, the perſons who decided upon the propriety or impropriety of granting his requeſt, we are told by Cyprian (Epiſt. lxvii. p. 127.), were a council or aſſembly of miniſters. " Et cum (ſays he) ad nos in
" Africam legatos miſiſſet, optans ad communicationem
" noſtram admitti, hinc a concilio plurimorum ſacerdo-
" tum qui præſentes eramus ſententiam retulerit;" *i. e.*
" And when he had ſent deputies to us to Africa, deſir-
" ing to be received into our communion, he carried
" back, from a council of many miniſters who were
" preſent, this ſentence or determination." Thus, too,

he informs us, in the ſame Epiſtle, p. 129. that the perſons who judged in the caſe of Marcian, when he alſo apoſtatized, were the office-bearers alone. "Ex "quibus cum Marcianus eſſe cœperit, et ſe Novatiano "conjungens, adverſarius miſericordiæ et pietatis exti- "terit: ſententiam non dicat, ſed *accipiat*, nec ſic agat "quaſi ipſe *judicaverit de collegio ſacerdotum*, quando ipſe "ſit ab univerſis ſacerdotibus judicatus." Thus, likewiſe, Privatus, an old heretic, was tried and condemned by a council conſiſting of ninety miniſters, which met for the purpoſe in the Lambeſitanian colony; and was alſo denied admiſſion into the Chriſtian fellowſhip of the African churches by a ſimilar council, which was afterwards convened, to decide upon an application which was made by him to that end. "Per Felicianum "autem (ſays he, p. 92.) ſignificavi tibi, frater veniſſe "Carthaginem Privatum veterem hæreticum, in Lam- "beſitana colonia, ante multos fere annos, ob multa et "gravia delicta nonaginta epiſcoporum ſententia con- "demnatum, anteceſſorum etiam noſtrorum, quod et "veſtram conſcientiam non latet, Fabiani et Donati "literis ſeveriſſime notatum, qui cum cauſam ſuam apud "nos in concilio, quod habuimus idibus Maiis, quæ "proxime fuerunt, agere velle ſe diceret, nec admiſſus "eſſet, fortunatum iſtum ſibi pſeudoepiſcopum dignum "collegio ſuo fecit *."

* It has indeed been aſſerted by King, p. 105. "that the ſame "mode was obſerved in the depoſition of a biſhop as in his elec- "tion. As a biſhop was elected by the people over whom he "was to preſide, and by the neighbouring biſhops, ſo was he de- "poſed by the ſame; both which things ſeem to be intimated in "that paſſage of the forementioned Epiſtle (Epiſt. lxviii.), wherein "it is ſaid, that the people chiefly has power, either to chooſe "worthy biſhops, or to refuſe unworthy ones." But upon this it may be remarked, that in the paſſage referred to, Cyprian is not ſpeaking of the degree of authority which the people ſhould

As it was by miniſters alone that miniſters were judged and condemned, if guilty, ſo it was by miniſters alone that they were afterwards received, on evidences of their repentance, into the communion of the church. This is manifeſt from what is mentioned by Cyprian (Epiſt. lii. p. 76.) reſpecting Trophimus, who had ſeparated from the church, but afterwards, upon his penitence, was publicly re-admitted. "Nam ſicut anteceſſores noſtri (ſays he) ſæpe fecerunt, colligendis fratribus noſtris, chariſſimus frater noſter Cornelius neceſſitati ſuccubuit: et quoniam cum Trophimo pars maxima plebis abſceſſerat, redeunte nunc ad eccleſiam Trophimo, et ſatisfaciente, et pœnitentia deprecationis errorem

have in the depoſition of biſhops compared with that of the miniſters of the church, but ſimply ſhewing that it is lawful for them to ſeparate from ſuch biſhops. This he demonſtrates by various commands and examples adduced from the ſcriptures; and then ſubjoins, "Propter quod plebs obſequens præceptis Dominicis, et "Deum timens, a peccatore præpoſito *ſeparare ſe* debet, nec ſe ad "ſacrilegi ſacerdotis ſacrificia miſcere; quando ipſa maxime habeat "poteſtatem vel eligendi dignos ſacerdotes, vel indignos recu-"ſandi;" *i. e.* in ſubſtance, "Wherefore the people, obedient to "the commandments of the Lord, and fearing God, ought to "ſeparate themſelves from a wicked office-bearer, eſpecially as "they have the power of chooſing worthy biſhops, or of refuſing "unworthy ones." And as the people are here ſaid to have had the power of chooſing a worthy miniſter, or refuſing an unworthy one, and not to have had more power for this purpoſe, as King tranſlates the words, than the governors of the church, it appears no leſs manifeſt from other paſſages, that Cyprian cannot be ſuppoſed to aſſert in this paſſage, that the people were allowed to ſit in any court which met to deliberate on the depoſition of a biſhop. As it is evident that a biſhop, when elected by them, was ordained ſolely by the miniſters of the church, ſo it is no leſs obvious from the inſtances which have been mentioned, that though they have a power alſo of ſeparating from an unworthy overſeer, it is intended to be intimated, that this is only to take place after he has been previouſly judged by an aſſembly compoſed of the office-bearers.

" priſtinum confitente et fraternitatem, quam nuper " abſtraxerat, cum plena humilitate et ſatisfactione revo- " cante, auditæ ſunt ejus preces; et in eccleſiam Domini " non tam Trophimus, quam maximus fratrum numerus, " qui cum Trophimo fuerat admiſſus eſt: qui omnes " regreſſuri ad eccleſiam non eſſent, niſi cum Trophimo " comitante veniſſent." The perſons who re-admitted not merely Trophimus, but a great number of the people who had ſeceded along with him, and now repented of their error, were an aſſembly compoſed of the colleagues of Cyprian and Cornelius his fellow-biſhop. " Tractatu " illic cum collegis plurimis habito ſuſceptus eſt Tro- " phimus;" *i. e.* " A deliberation being held there, with " many of our colleagues, Trophimus was received." And that it was the ſame perſons alone who were inveſted with a power judicially to pardon and puniſh the ſins of tranſgreſſors in general in the Chriſtian church, ſeems to be no leſs clear from his Epiſtle to Jubaianus, p. 145. " Nam Petro (ſays he) primum Dominus, ſuper quem " ædificavit eccleſiam, et unde unitatis originem inſtituit, " et oſtendit; poteſtatem iſtam dedit, ut id ſolveretur in " cœlis, quod ille ſolviſſet in terris. Et poſt reſurrec- " tionem quoque ad apoſtolos loquitur dicens: Sicut miſit " me pater, et ego mitto vos: Hoc cum dixiſſet, " inſpiravit, et ait illis: Accipite Spiritum ſanctum: " Si cujus remiſeritis peccata, remittentur illi: ſi cujus " tenueritis tenebuntur." That is, " For the Lord " gave to Peter, and afterwards to his apoſtles, this " power, that what they bound on earth ſhould be bound " in heaven, and what they looſed on earth ſhould be " looſed in heaven." " Whence," he adds, " we under- " ſtand that it is lawful for none but *the office-bearers* of " the church to baptize, and grant remiſſion of ſins. " Unde intelligimus non niſi in eccleſia *præpoſitis*, et " in evangelica lege, ac Dominica ordinatione fundatis " licere baptizare, et remiſſam peccatorum dare." If it

was his opinion, however, that none but the office-bearers, or the *præpoſiti in eccleſia*, could bind and looſe in general, and grant a declaration of the remiſſion of ſins at baptiſm in particular, is it not obvious that it muſt have been they alone who, in his view, were intruſted with the government of the church? Had every member enjoyed an equality of power with the miniſters, to bind and looſe, to pardon and puniſh offenders in general, can we ſuppoſe that Cyprian would have inferred from theſe words of Chriſt, that this authority was lawful to none but "the "elders, or *præpoſiti?*"

Let it not be objected, that, in the following page, the church at large is ſaid by him to poſſeſs all the power of her Spouſe and Lord: "Hæc eſt una quæ tenet et "poſſidet omnem Sponſi ſui et Domini poteſtatem." As it could not be concluded from this, in oppoſition to innumerable paſſages in his writings, that it was his opinion that every member had power to baptize as well as the paſtor, ſo it can no more be concluded from it, in oppoſition to expreſſions no leſs pointed and determinate, that every member was entitled to be a virtual though not a nominal ruler. He as expreſsly ſays, that it is lawful to none but the miniſters, or *præpoſiti*, to bind or looſe, becauſe it was to them alone that Chriſt committed this authority when he addreſſed his apoſtles after his reſurrection (John xx. 21, 22, 23.), as he declares in any paſſage, that it is lawful for them alone to adminiſter the ſacraments. His meaning, therefore, in this ſentence muſt be, that though the whole power of Chriſt was given to the church to be exerciſed by her miniſters, yet it was not to be exerciſed by every individual of her members in particular. Nor let it be urged, that, from different Epiſtles, it appears that the people were not only allowed to be preſent at public deliberations, but even to ſpeak and vote. It has been the mind of ſome very learned and reſpectable Preſbyterians, that, in

extraordinary cafes, laymen were allowed to fit in thefe courts and deliver their advice, and expreſs their concurrence. It was not however the members indiſcriminately who obtained this privilege, according to theſe writers, but, while the reſt were permitted to be preſent as auditors, it was the learned and intelligent only, who had been invited to the performance of this ſpecial duty, that were allowed to ſit as counſellors in the aſſembly. "Eorum (ſays Junius, Cont. iii. lib. ii. cap. xxv. n. 2.) "qui conciliis interſunt, varia eſſe genera: Eſſe audientes "qui in doctrina et ordine ex auditione informantur: "eſſe doctos, qui ad conſultationem adhibentur: eſſe "denique epiſcopos et preſbyteros, qui decidunt res "ferendis ſententiis:" *i. e.* "Of thoſe who are preſent in "councils, there are various deſcriptions of perſons: "Some are hearers, and are inſtructed in the doctrine "and order of the church: ſome are learned, and are "admitted as counſellors; and ſome are biſhops and "preſbyters, who, delivering their opinions upon the "ſubjects which they examine, pronounce the deciſions." And again (Cont. iv. lib. i. cap. xv. n. 15.), he ſays, "Qui ſine authoritate eccleſiæ adſunt, eorum alii etiam "conſultationibus adhiberi poſſunt, ut docti, præſertim "eccleſiaſtici, ſed dicere ſententiam definitivam non "poſſunt;" *i. e.* "Of thoſe who are preſent without the "authority of the church, ſome who are learned, and "eſpecially eccleſiaſtics, may be admitted to the con-"ſultations, but they cannot pronounce a definitive "ſentence." Whether this repreſentation however be correct or not, it ſeems plain that even admitting that the people, in ſome inſtances, might be allowed to ſpeak, it could be only as adviſers; and even granting that ſometimes they were permitted to vote, it could be only to ſhew their concurrence, or ſimply as an expreſſion of their ſentiments, for, after all, the power of deciſion appears ſtill to have belonged to the office-bearers alone.

Cyprian mentions (Epiſt. lv. p. 96.) two different inſtances, in which when the people had oppoſed the reſtoration of ſome who had formerly apoſtatized, but afterwards exhibited evidences of repentance, to the communion of the church, he had himſelf received them. "Unus (ſays he) atque alius, obtinente plebe, et contradicente, mea tamen facilitate ſuſcepti, pejores extiterunt, "quam prius fuerant, nec fidem pœnitentiæ ſervare "potuerunt, quia nec cum vera pœnitentia venerant;" *i. e.* "One and another, who had been admitted by my "indulgence, though the people oppoſed it, turned out "worſe than they were before, becauſe they had come "again into the church without true repentance." This, however, would have been impoſſible, had the people, who were unqueſtionably more numerous than Cyprian and his fellow-miniſters, poſſeſſed an equality of eccleſiaſtical power with him and his brethren in deciding upon this and other matters. Beſides, had this been the caſe, how could he affirm, as we fomerly ſaw, that the perſons who governed the Numidian churches were the miniſters, ſince if the people were allowed any higher power than that of occaſionally delivering their opinion and expreſſing their concurrence, either by voting or otherwiſe, it was more really they who adminiſtered theſe churches than the miniſters and office-bearers? And how, eſpecially upon the contrary ſuppoſition, could he repreſent it as lawful for none but the *præpoſiti in eccleſia*, or the miniſters of the church, to bind and looſe, or remit and puniſh ſin, ſince if every member had a power of final judicial determination no leſs than the office-bearers, they would exerciſe this authority as well as their miniſters, nay, on account of their number, would much more really have poſſeſſed it? Whatever occaſional liberties then, for the ſake of peace, might be granted to the people, to ſpeak and vote in the congregations which were placed under the inſpection of Cyprian, it is plain

that it must have been only to express their acquiescence in the decisions of their office-bearers, and by no means implied that degree of power in ecclesiastical government for which Independents contend. He too, as well as Clemens, Ignatius, Jerome, Tertullian, and Origen, affirms, as we have seen, that it is the office-bearers alone who govern the church; and at the same time, by a great variety of expressions, clearly intimates that every measure was not then subjected to the votes of the members, and, by their decision, adopted or set aside.

From these, then, and other testimonies, it is contended that the constitution of the primitive church, after the days of the apostles, resembled the Presbyterian and not the Independent scheme. It is again requested however, that it may be carefully remarked that no argument is deduced from it for the truth of Presbytery. Many errors existed, even in the earliest times, in the primitive church, and it is only as far as their principles and practice are sanctioned by scripture that we are warranted either to admit or to imitate them.

LETTER IX.

SIR,

IF the government of the church is to be committed only *to a few*, it comes next to be considered who are these few? Are they the ministers alone, who feed the flock with knowledge and understanding, or have we reason to believe that there are *other* elders associated with them, who are simply to rule and not to preach? The last is the opinion of Presbyterians; and though it is in general denied by most of the present classes of Independents, was admitted by many of their most respectable predecessors. Dr. Watts affirms (p. 125. of his

Treatiſe on the Foundation of the Chriſtian Church), " that if it happens that there is but one miniſter or " preſbyter in a church, or if the miniſters are young " men of ſmall experience in the world, it is *uſual* and " *proper* that ſome of the eldeſt, graveſt, and wiſeſt " members be deputed by the church to join with and " aſſiſt the miniſters in the care and management of this " affair (the admiſſion and excluſion of members)." Mr. Thomas Goodwin, in his Catechiſm on Church-government, p. 19. expreſsly aſſerts, that there is a claſs of elders who are to rule and not to teach. Mr. John Cotton alſo, in his Way of the Churches of Chriſt in New England, chap. ii. ſect. ii. p. 13.—35. contends that ſuch elders are a divine inſtitution, and repreſents it as very generally obtaining in theſe churches. The Weſtminiſter Independents, moreover, in their Reaſons againſt the Third Propoſition concerning Preſbyterial Government, p. 40. declare, " that the ſcripture ſays " *much* of *two ſorts* of elders, *teaching* and *ruling*, and in " ſome places, ſo *plaine*, as if *of purpoſe* to diſtinguiſh " them;" and (p. 3.) " that the whole Reformed " churches had theſe different elders." And it cannot be denied that never was there a more ſtrenuous or enlightened advocate for this order of elders than the great Dr. Owen, who may juſtly be conſidered as the moſt learned of Independents *. Venerable, however, as ſuch names are, I hope it will appear that it reſts not merely on their opinion and authority, but on the dictates of reaſon, and the explicit teſtimony of the word of God.

That the government of the church, then, ſhould be veſted not merely in the elders who teach, but in a claſs of elders who rule and do not teach, conjoined with the former, appears to be evident from the following reaſons.

* See his book on the Goſpel-church.

In the firſt place, It has been obſerved by ſome of your brethren, that it ſeems to be taught in ſcripture, that there muſt be a *plurality* of elders in every church; and from *the maintenance* which is requiſite for every teaching elder, it appears obvious that they cannot *all* be elders who teach. That there muſt be a *plurality* of elders in every church, they tell us, is evident, among other paſſages, from Acts xiv. 23. where we are told, that "Paul "and Barnabas ordained *elders* in *every* church *." The particular number of theſe elders is not ſpecified, but it appears fit that it ſhould be determined by the number of members. At any rate it is certain, that it can never properly be leſs than *three;* for if there were only two, and if they ſhould happen to differ upon any point of diſcipline, or any caſe of government, no deciſion could be made. But if, in every church however ſmall, there can never be leſs than *three* elders, it ſeems obvious that *all* of them cannot be elders who *teach*. In your own ſociety, as well as your ſiſter-ſocieties, the teaching elders receive a maintenance, which enables them to give themſelves *wholly* to their particular function, without intermingling in the buſineſs of the world. This indeed is their juſt prerogative. "Do ye not know," ſays Paul (1 Cor. ix. 13. 14.), "that they which mi-"niſter about holy things, live of the things of the "temple? and they which wait at the altar, are partakers "with the altar? Even ſo *hath the Lord ordained*, that "they which preach the goſpel, ſhould *live* of the "goſpel." And though miniſters, in extraordinary inſtances, like the Apoſtle Paul, may give up with this right, nothing appears plainer than that it is not to be done in ordinary caſes. Reaſon and experience indeed

* See your brother Mr. Ballentine's Obſervations, p. 90.—95. and the Review of theſe Obſervations in the Miſſionary Magazine, which quotes his ſentiments with the moſt decided approbation.

unite in proving, that nothing is better fitted to ſecure a reſpectable miniſtry, than to grant them ſuch a maintenance as will enable them to devote themſelves entirely to perſonal improvement and public duty. But to afford at leaſt to *three* teaching elders ſuch a maintenance, the funds of *ſcarcely any* church are adequate. If there muſt be a *plurality* of elders in every church however ſmall, and if that plurality, in every caſe of government, cannot be leſs than *three*, it appears naturally to follow that they cannot *all* be teachers, for all cannot be maintained. There muſt of conſequence in every church, not only be an elder who teaches as well as rules, and who, as he gives himſelf *wholly* to the duties of his profeſſion, is entitled to maintenance from that ſociety, but elders alſo, whoſe maintenance, if required, ſince they are allowed to attach themſelves likewiſe to ſecular employments, is not ſo great, and more conſiſtent with the funds and abilities of the church.

Secondly, The extent of that inſpection and ſuperintendence which are required from the rulers of the church over the members, ſeems to ſuggeſt the neceſſity of a claſs of elders who are not to teach, but to have this peculiar province aſſigned them.

Not only is it the duty of the elders of the church to make known, by preaching, their privileges and duties to the Chriſtian members, but a claſs of office-bearers is required for government and inſpection, if poſſible, ſtill more varied and extenſive. It is they alone, we have ſeen, who are to admit and exclude members, and attend to all thoſe laborious inveſtigations which are often connected with the performance at leaſt of the laſt of theſe acts. It is they alone who are to judge in matters of government, and to determine on every point of difficulty and importance, according to the rules before explained; as well as to regulate, according to Dr. Owen (p. 290.), the external concerns of the church of Chriſt, and ap-

point ſeaſons for extraordinary duties. Beſides this, the Doctor remarks (p. 292.) that they are bound,

"In the 1ſt place, To watch diligently over the ways, "walking, and converſation of all the members of the "church; to ſee that it be blameleſs, without offence, "uſeful, exemplary, and in all things anſwering the "holineſs of the commands of Chriſt, the honour of the "goſpel, and profeſſion which in the world they make "thereof. And upon the obſervation which they ſo "make, in the watch wherein they are placed, to in-"ſtruct, admoniſh, charge, exhort, encourage, comfort, "as they ſee cauſe. And this they are to attend unto "with courage and diligence.

"They are, 2dly, To watch againſt all riſings or "appearances of ſuch differences and diviſions on the "account of things eccleſiaſtical or civil, as unto their "names, rights, and proprieties in the world, that are "contrary unto that love which the Lord Jeſus requireth "in a peculiar and eminent manner to be found amongſt "his diſciples.—The due obſervance of this law of love "in itſelf and all its fruits, with the prevention, removal, "or condemnation of all that is contrary unto it, is that "in which the rule of the church doth principally conſiſt. "And conſidering the weakneſs, the paſſions, the tempta-"tions of men, the mutual provocations and exaſpera-"tions that are apt to fall out even among the beſt, "the influence that earthly occaſions are apt to have "upon their minds, the frowardneſs ſometimes of men's "natural tempers; the attendance unto this one duty or "part of rule, requires the utmoſt diligence of them "that are called unto it. And it is merely either the "want of acquaintance with the nature of that law and "its fruits, which the Lord Chriſt requires among his "diſciples, or an undervaluation of the worth and glory "of it in the church; or inadvertency unto the cauſes "of its decays, and of breaches made in it, or ignorance

" of the care and duties that are neceſſary to its preſerva-
" tion, that induce men to judge that the work of an
" *eſpecial office* is not required hereunto.

" In the 3d place, Their duty is to warn all the
" members of the church of their eſpecial church-duties,
" that they may not be found negligent or wanting in
" them. There are eſpecial duties required reſpectively
" of all church-members, according unto the diſtinct
" talents, whether in things ſpiritual or temporal, which
" they have received. Some are rich, and ſome are
" poor; ſome are old, and ſome are young; ſome in
" peace, ſome in trouble; ſome have received more
" ſpiritual gifts than others, and have more opportunities
" for their exerciſe. It belongs unto the rule of the
" church, that all be admoniſhed, inſtructed, and exhorted
" to attend unto their reſpective duties; not only publicly
" in the preaching of the word, but *perſonally* as occaſion
" doth require, according to the obſervation which thoſe
" in rule do make of their forwardneſs or remiſſneſs in
" them.

" 4thly, They are to watch againſt the beginning of
" any church-diſorders, ſuch as thoſe that infeſted the
" church of Corinth, or any of the like ſort; with
" remiſſneſs as unto the aſſemblies of the church, and
" the duties of them, which ſome are ſubject unto, as
" the apoſtle intimates, Heb. x. 25. On the conſtancy
" and diligence of the elders in this part of their work
" and duty, the very being and order of the church
" do greatly depend. The want hereof hath opened a
" door unto all the troubles, diviſions, and ſchiſms, that
" in all ages have invaded and perplexed the churches of
" Chriſt from within themſelves. And from thence alſo
" have decays in faith, love, and order, inſenſibly pre-
" vailed in many to the diſhonour of Chriſt, and the
" danger of their own ſouls. Firſt, one grows remiſs
" in attending unto the aſſemblies of the church, and

" then another; firſt to one degree, then to another, " until the whole lump be infected. A diligent watch " over theſe things, as to the beginnings of them in all " the members of the church, will either heal and re- " cover them that offend, or it will warn others, and " keep the church from being either corrupted or defiled: " Heb. xiii. 12.

" In the 5th place, It belongs unto them alſo to viſit " the ſick, eſpecially ſuch as whoſe inward or outward " conditions do expoſe them unto more than ordinary " trials in their ſickneſs; that is, the poor, the afflicted, " the tempted in any kind. This in general is a moral " duty, a work of mercy; but it is moreover, a peculiar " church-duty, by virtue of inſtitution. And one end " of the inſtitution of churches, is that the diſciples of " Chriſt may have all that ſpiritual and temporal relief " which is needful for them, and uſeful to them in their " troubles and diſtreſſes. And if this duty were diligently " attended to by the officers of the church, it would add " much unto the glory and beauty of our order, and be " an abiding reſerve with relief in the minds of them " whoſe outward condition expoſeth them to ſtraits and " ſorrows in ſuch a ſeaſon.

" 6thly, It belongs to them and their office, to adviſe " and give direction unto the deacons of the church, as " unto the making proviſion and diſtribution of the " charity of the church for the relief of the poor. The " office of the deacons is principally *executive*, as we ſhall " ſee afterwards. Inquiſition into the ſtate of the poor, " with all their circumſtances, with the warning of all " the members of the church unto liberality for their " ſupply, belongs to the elders.

" In the 7th place, When the ſtate of the church is " ſuch, through ſuffering, perſecution, and affliction, " that the poor be multiplied among them, ſo as that " the church itſelf is not able to provide for their relief

" in a due manner, if any ſupply be ſent unto them " from the love and bounty of other churches, it is to " be depoſited with theſe elders, and diſpoſed according " to their advice, and with that of the teachers of the " church: Acts xi. 30.

" And 8thly, It is of great importance to teaching " elders to be acquainted with their flock, that they " may be directed in their labours. He who makes it " not his buſineſs to know the ſtate of the church which " he miniſters unto in the word and doctrine, as to " their knowledge, their judgment and underſtanding, " their temptations and occaſions, and applies not him- " ſelf in his miniſtry to ſearch out what is neceſſary and " uſeful unto their edification; he fights uncertainly in " his whole work, as a man beating the air. But " whereas their obligation to attend unto the word and " prayer, confines them much unto a retirement for " the greateſt part of their time, they cannot by them- " ſelves obtain that acquaintance with the whole flock, " but that others may greatly aſſiſt therein, from their " daily inſpection, converſe, and obſervation." After which the Doctor ſubjoins various other duties; and then adds (p. 300), " It is a vain apprehenſion to ſuppoſe " that one or two teaching officers in a church, who " are obliged to give themſelves unto the word and " prayer, to labour with all their might in the word and " doctrine, to preach in and out of ſeaſon; that is, at " all times, on all opportunities as they are able, to con- " vince gainſayers by word and writing, pleading for " the truth; to aſſiſt and guide the conſciences of all, " under their temptations and deſertions, with ſundry " other duties, in part ſpoken to before, ſhould be able " to take care of, and attend with diligence unto all " theſe things that do evidently belong unto the rule of " the church."

Since such then are the duties incumbent on the rulers, and since, if the church be extensive or greatly scattered, as is frequently the case, it is impossible for one, or two, or even three teaching elders, though the congregation could support them, faithfully and satisfactorily to discharge these duties, it seems necessary that there should be another class of elders to attend to them. In your societies, if I mistake not, these duties are in general committed to the deacons, who assist the pastor in the superintendence of the flock. Such superintendence, however, is no proper part of the office of a deacon considered *as such*, and belongs only to those who are appointed as rulers to watch over the church. And though this inspection and superintendence may in some measure be performed likewise by those who are members, as they may communicate instruction also in a manner suited to their particular stations, yet it is plain, that, like the duty of preaching, they belong properly, in all this extent, to those only who are elders and overseers of the flock. But if such an oversight and superintendence be the duty of the elders, and if it exceed the abilities of those elders who teach, and are enjoined to give themselves *wholly* to their particular calling, does it not follow that there must be an order of elders *distinct* from them, who are to assist them in governing and watching over the flock?

In the third place, The tendency which in every age, even by the confession of Independents, has been discovered in pastors to assume to themselves an immoderate and unreasonable power over the church of Christ, seems to point out the necessity of a class of elders different from them, who may check these usurpations, and restrain their ambition.

That the ministers of religion, however amiable and venerable their character, are subject to the frailties and imperfections of humanity, and that a desire of undue

and extravagant authority has too often been one of these imperfections, is a truth which will scarcely be denied. At the distance of a very few years only from the death of the apostles did this pernicious principle begin to operate, and it gradually produced those assumptions of Episcopacy, and that tyranny of Popery, which so long enslaved the Christian world. And to what cause are we to ascribe the introduction of these evils? If we attend both to the nature of the thing, and to the representations of the fathers, who witnessed and deplored them, they were to be attributed in a great measure to the discontinuance of that separate class of rulers who were originally instituted in the Christian church, and whose superintendence restrained the ambition of the pastors. Accordingly, the writer of the Commentaries commonly attributed to Ambrose, in his explication of 1 Tim. v. 1. says, "Wherefore both the synagogue, and afterwards the "church had elders, without whose counsel nothing "was done in the church; which order by what negli- "gence it grew into disuse I know not, unless perhaps "by the sloth, or rather by the pride of the teachers, "while they alone wish to appear something." "Unde "et synagoga et postea ecclesia seniores habuit, sine "quorum consilio nihil gerebatur in ecclesia: quod qua "negligentia obsoleverit nescio: nisi forte doctorum "desidia, aut magis superbia, dum soli volunt aliquid "videri." And we know that Calvin, from a conviction of these truths, and from a persuasion of the necessity of such an order of elders to prevent those excesses of tyranny which were practised by the Romish clergy at the period of the Reformation, A. D. 1542 *, revived these rulers

* Though this order of elders however was more generally restored by this illustrious reformer at the period referred to, yet it does not appear that it was entirely abolished even in the darkest times of error and corruption which preceded this era. Bucer at least informs us, in his book entitled, Scripta duo Adversaria

in the Chriſtian church. Were ſuch an order again to be diſcontinued, and the government again intruſted to the miniſters alone, is it not evident that the door would be opened for ſimilar tyranny over the heritage of God? The inſtitution therefore of a ſeparate order to reſtrain theſe encroachments, and maintain the rights and liberties of the people, ſeems abſolutely requiſite for the welfare of the church.

In anſwer to this let it not be remarked, that the power of the clergy is equally bounded by the ſcheme of Independency, which allows them not to eſtabliſh any of their meaſures without the previous judgment and conſent of the members. It is plain that the clergy could more readily influence a congregation at large, many of whom are unable to judge, and will be diſpoſed to be partial to the opinion of their paſtors, than a few of the wiſeſt and moſt enlightened of the people, who are no leſs qualified to judge perhaps than the miniſters themſelves. Beſides, it has already been attempted to be proved, that ſuch a power of judgment and conſent is not granted to the members, and conſequently that ſuch

Latomi, *&c.* p. 77. that the Bohemian churches, who, "alone "almoſt," to uſe his expreſſive words, "*preſerved in the world* "the purity of the doctrine and *the vigour of the diſcipline* of Chriſt," had this order amongſt them. "Illa certe ratio optima, quam "obſervant fratres Picardi, qui *ſoli prope in orbe*, cum puritate "doctrinæ, vigorem etiam diſciplinæ Chriſti apud ſe retinuerunt, "quam laudem ut iis tribuamus, et Dominum, qui ſic in illis "operatur, celebremus, res ipſa cogit, etiamſi fratres illi a præ- "poſtere doctis nonnullis contemnantur. Ratio vero quam in "hac re obſervant, hæc eſt. Præter miniſtros verbi et ſacramen- "torum habent certum collegium virorum prudentia et gravitate "ſpiritus præcellentium, qui munus obeunt monendi ac corrigendi "fratres peccantes, componendi diſſidentes, et in cauſis eorum "judicandi. De hujuſmodi ſenioribus ſcripſit et divus Ambroſius in "Epiſt. i. ad. Tim. cap. v. Unde et ſynagoga," *&c.*

a preſervative from the aſſumptions of the clergy is not to be admitted into the church of Chriſt.

Fourthly, There are many to be found in the church who, though not fitted to be teaching elders, are eminently qualified to be rulers. Moſt men have it not in their power to attain that learning, and that facility of expreſſion, which are requiſite for the former, while many of them have acquired that experience and ſagacity which may fit them for the uſeful diſcharge of the latter. Shall the church then, becauſe they are not qualified to be numbered among her inſtructors, be totally deprived of the benefit of their endowments? No, certainly. Does not Paul, when demonſtrating that there are to be *various offices* in the church of Chriſt (Rom. xii. 1 Cor. xii. &c.), urge, in proof of it, that he has beſtowed upon its members *a variety of gifts* which qualify them for theſe offices? But ſince Jeſus has beſtowed upon many of the members of his church gifts for ruling, while he has not imparted to them gifts for teaching, if there be no office aſſigned to them for the exerciſe of theſe gifts, how can this reaſoning be concluſive? I maintain, therefore, that ſince Jeſus has communicated to many members in his church gifts for ruling, and for that alone, and ſince we are taught to believe that where he imparts gifts, there is a correſponding office, there muſt in his church be a claſs of elders who are to rule and not to teach, as there is a claſs of elders who are appointed to rule as well as to teach.

Is it ſaid, that if this reaſoning eſtabliſh any thing, it eſtabliſhes too much, for as, according to Independents, *all* the members are fitted to judge, ſhould not they *all* be conſtituted judges and rulers? It is replied, that to make ſuch an inference is in truth to beg the queſtion, or to take for granted the thing to be proved. It was before evinced, that *the whole of the members* of any congregation are very far from being qualified for ſuch a

truſt, and conſequently, even according to this principle, ought not to be judges. It is certain, beſides, that every one who is qualified to perform the office of *a deacon* is not entitled, even among Independents, from his poſſeſſing theſe gifts, to exerciſe that office, but only ſo many as have been regularly authorized and appointed by the church, though it would be very ſurpriſing if the other duties of a paſtor prevented him from fulfilling the office of a deacon, that none of the members ſhould be nominated to aſſiſt him. As then it appears that there is to be a diverſity of offices in the church of Jeſus, correſponding to the diverſified gifts of its members, and as there are many of the members who, though eminently qualified for ruling, are not fitted for teaching, it appears neceſſarily to follow that there muſt be a claſs of elders in the church who are to rule and not to teach. As it has, moreover, been proved that every member has not theſe gifts, of conſequence every member cannot have that authority. And as the mere poſſeſſion of gifts does not warrant, even upon the principles of Independents, all who have them to execute the office of a deacon and other functions, but that only ſo many as the general intereſts of the body require, and as have been appointed to the regular diſcharge of them, are authorized to fulfil them, ſo it is no leſs manifeſt that all who are diſtinguiſhed for gifts of ruling are not on this account to be choſen to rule, but only ſo many as are neceſſary for the inſpection and government of the church.

It is ſurpriſing, in ſhort, that the commiſſion of the government to a few of the members who do not teach, but merely rule together with the paſtors, ſhould be ſo diſpleaſing both to Epiſcopalians and Independents, ſince ſomething ſimilar exiſts among themſelves. Not only are laymen who do not teach, but barely rule, to be found among the different bodies of Proteſtants on the continent, and in the high ſituation even of cardinals

and inſpectors of the different orders of the clergy in the Romiſh church, but it is certain that in thoſe churches where Epiſcopacy is eſtabliſhed, many rule who are not teachers. Biſhop Burnet, in his Funeral Sermon on Archbiſhop Tillotſon, expreſsly affirms, that a biſhop *as ſuch*, though appointed to rule, has *no care of ſouls*, by preaching, devolved upon him. "In his function," ſays he, "he was a conſtant preacher: For though he "had *no care of ſouls upon him*, yet few that had, labour-"ed ſo painfully as he did." And Dr. South, in his Sermon preached at the Conſecration of the Biſhop of Rocheſter, vol. i. p. 209. explicitly aſſerts, that "a teach-"ing talent is not abſolutely neceſſary in a biſhop, nor "is of *the vital conſtitution* of his function. If he have "it, it is not to be refuſed; but if he have it not, it is "not much to be deſired." And beſides their biſhops, we know that they have chancellors, and commiſſioners, and church-wardens, and other officers, who, though laymen, judge and decide in eccleſiaſtical matters. Dr. Whitaker moreover, though an Epiſcopalian, acknowledges that there ſhould be two claſſes of elders in the church; and Dr. Whitby, as will be ſhewn, expreſsly avows himſelf of the very ſame ſentiments. See alſo Biſhop Jewel's Defence of his Apology, part i. p. 41. where he admits that laymen ſhould judge in the church; and ſee, too, Willet in his Controverſiæ, Controv. iii. Quæſt. iv. p. 41. where he attempts to prove, by a variety of arguments, that laymen ſhould be allowed to be eccleſiaſtical judges. With regard to Independents, it is certain that though the multitude be permitted to judge and vote with the paſtors, it is a few only of the leading and moſt active of the members who determine every buſineſs. The only difference then between Preſbyterians and them ſeems to be this, that while the government is committed by the former to a claſs of elders who do not teach, together with the paſtors who

rule as well as teach, it is intrusted *nominally* by the latter to all the members together with the pastors, but is exercised *in reality* only by *a few* of them who influence the rest. Now, is it not better to give not only the power but the name of rulers to these few along with the pastor, than, like Independents, to delude the people with the mere name, while the power is necessarily limited to a few? On the whole, as the government must really, from the nature of the thing, be placed in the hands of a few, and as the leading men in a congregation, though perhaps forward and loquacious, are often least fitted to direct their decisions, is not the system of Presbytery more enlightened and wise? By this means, they are secured from the evils which too often result from the confidence or intrigues of any noisy declaimer; and a court of ecclesiastical judges is obtained, not only more enlightened and judicious than those who frequently possess the ascendency in popular assemblies, but who, from their knowledge and experience, being more upon *an equality* with each other, are less likely to be exposed to a superior influence, and to unite at once that ability and that independence which are absolutely necessary to the enjoyment of a wise and perfect government.

LETTER X.

SIR,

SATISFACTORY as may be the considerations which are suggested by reason for the necessity and utility of the institution of a separate order of elders, it is on revelation alone that we rest its authority. There are three passages in particular which appear to assert its truth.

In the first place, Rom. xii. 6, 7, 8. Here it is necessary to remark, that, in the preceding verses, the apostle

repreſents the church of Chriſt under the metaphor of a body, and affirms that as in the natural body there is a variety of members poſſeſſed of different and ſeparate powers, ſo in this ſpiritual body there is a diverſity of offices, for the exerciſe of which a diverſity of gifts is requiſite. "As we have many members in one body," ſays he, "and all members have not *the ſame office*, ſo we "being many, are one body in Chriſt, and every one "members one of another." After this, he declares it was the duty of thoſe to whom gifts had been imparted for the exerciſe of particular offices faithfully to employ them, without vanity or arrogance (compare ver. 3.), in their different functions: "Having then gifts, differing "according to the grace that is given to us, whether "prophecy, let us propheſy according to the proportion "of faith; or miniſtry, let us wait on our miniſtering; "or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhort-"eth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with "ſimplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that "ſheweth mercy, with cheerfulneſs." Now, ſince in the body of Chriſt there is a diverſity of offices as ſtriking as that of the offices of the different members of the natural body; and ſince, as is no leſs evident from the compariſon, the united members of the body of Chriſt can no more exerciſe *any* office of *that* body which does not belong to them united, than every member of the human body united can diſcharge the office of *any particular* member of *that* body; and ſince, as is equally plain, there are *ſome* of the offices of the body of Chriſt which can be exerciſed by perſons who cannot diſcharge *any ſuperior* function, as in the human body there are *ſome offices* which can be performed only by the eye or the ear, while theſe members cannot diſcharge *any other* function; is it not obvious that if it can be proved that ruling is numbered among theſe offices in the former body, it will not only follow that it cannot be exerciſed *by all*, as ſee-

ing or hearing cannot be performed by all the members of the latter body, but that it can be performed by some who cannot teach, as seeing and hearing can be exercised by members of the latter body which have no other function?

But that ruling is here mentioned as one of the offices in the church of Christ appears to be undeniable. These offices, as we are informed by Mr. Goodwin and Dr. Guyse, are first divided into prophecy * and ministry: and are again subdivided into those of the exhorter and teacher, comprehended under the former; and those of the person who gives, of him who rules, and of him who shews mercy, included under the latter. Now, as Paul, when speaking of the offices of the church, after his general arrangement, specifies particularly *him that ruleth*, is it not evident that the office of the elder who rules is a divine institution? As he introduces it under the head of ministry, which is confessedly different in its other branches (that of the deacon who gave, and that of him who sheweth mercy) from the office-bearers who were appointed, under the head of prophecy, to teach and exhort, is it not obvious that this office must be completely distinct from that of teaching, and, like the office of the deacon, which too is included under ministry, may be exercised by those who have neither talents nor authority to preach the gospel? In short, as the gifts for ruling, which Paul here enjoins the governors of the church to exercise with diligence, by the very comparison before mentioned, are no more given to all the members of the church, than the power of seeing or hearing

* Understanding by prophecy, as Dr. Guyse has proved (see his Note on the place, and his Second Note on 1 Cor. xiv. 1.—5.), not the interpretation of scripture by immediate inspiration, or the foretelling of future events, but the *ordinary preaching* of the ministers of Christ, as his two witnesses are said to *prophesy* during the reign of Antichrist.

is imparted to all the members of our bodies, is it not manifeſt that this office of ruling cannot belong *to all the members* indiſcriminately? And, in fine, as mere gifts for *preaching*, or *giving*, do not authorize as many as have them to exerciſe the offices of a *paſtor* or a *deacon*, but thoſe only are warranted to do ſo who have been ſet apart to theſe offices, ſo is it not evident that when the duty of *ruling* is ſpoken of, every one is not here called to the performance of this duty, but as many only as have been conſidered to be requiſite to take the overſight of the church, and have been inveſted with the office of *rulers* for this end? Thus, then, it would appear that there is an office of rule in the church of Chriſt different from that of the elder who teaches, and that this office is not committed to all indiſcriminately, but to as many only of thoſe who are qualified for it, and are neceſſary for this end, as have been regularly ſet apart to it by the elders of the church.

In anſwer to this it has been ſaid, that the apoſtle is not here ſpeaking of *offices* but of *gifts*, and conſequently that it cannot be inferred from what is here ſaid, that there is an office of rule diſtinct from that of the elder who teaches. But in reply to this it may be obſerved, that by introducing a compariſon between the natural body and the church of Chriſt (ver. 4, 5.), and aſſerting that as in the former "there were many members, "all of which had not *the ſame office*," ſo in the latter there was a variety no leſs remarkable, he plainly points out a diverſity not only of gifts but of offices in the latter, as there was a diverſity not only of gifts but of offices in the former. Though therefore it were admitted that the apoſtle is ſpeaking only of the exerciſe of *the gifts* of him who ruleth, agreeably to what he ſays in ver. 6. he evidently ſuppoſes that there is *an office* for ruling in which theſe gifts may be exerciſed, and an office diſtinct from that of the teacher, as when he ſpeaks

of each of the members of our bodies as exercising thoſe gifts which are peculiar to *its office*, he aſcribes to it an office ſeparate from that of any of the other members. As the apoſtle moreover, when he mentions him who *teacheth*, and him who *giveth*, ſpeaks not merely of gifted brethren as exerciſing the endowments which are requiſite for theſe offices, but of ſuch only as were *ordained* to theſe particular functions, is it not manifeſt that when he mentions likewiſe him who ruleth, he muſt intend not merely *gifted* brethren as governing the church, but thoſe only who are inveſted with that particular office? Now, if *mere qualifications* for being a paſtor or a deacon will not authorize thoſe who poſſeſs them to exerciſe theſe gifts as *paſtors* or *deacons*, till they are ſet apart to theſe offices, it appears equally obvious that though the apoſtle were allowed here to ſpeak of thoſe who ruled as barely exerciſing *their gifts* for ruling with diligence, he cannot mean that any were to exerciſe theſe gifts for that end, but ſuch as had been ordained to *the office* of eccleſiaſtical rulers. Inveſtiture therefore with the *office* of ruling is as much requiſite to the exerciſe of rule, as inveſtiture with that of a *paſtor* is to teaching, and inveſtiture with that of a *deacon* is to giving. And as this office is *eſſentially different* from the former, and requires qualifications totally *diſtinct*, we are warranted to affirm that there muſt be an office of ruling in the church of Chriſt *completely different* from that of teaching; an office, for which as *all* have neither gifts nor authority, that cannot be exerciſed by *all*, and which, as many have endowments for it who are totally unfit for being public teachers, may be exerciſed by many who cannot be teachers of the church of God.

Still it is objected, that though we hear, in this paſſage, of him *who ruleth*, it may be only the perſon's *own family* that is intended. But to this it is anſwered, that the various duties here mentioned by the apoſtle as per-

formed by the different perſons of whom he ſpeaks, are repreſented by him as performed to the church only, and conſequently that it muſt be a rule which relates more immediately to the affairs of this ſociety which is deſigned. Is it contended with Doddridge and other Independents, that it is a rule or preſidency (as they ſay that the word means), which refers merely to the diſtribution of the charitable collections of the church? This would make him who *ruleth*, the ſame with the *deacon*, or him who *giveth*, which, in a diviſion of the different offices of the church, as is here ſtated, would be extremely inaccurate. Is it ſaid, moreover, that the exhorter, who is the ſame with the teacher, is mentioned apparently as a different office-bearer from him; and him that ſheweth mercy, who is the ſame with the deacon, or him who giveth, as a different office-bearer from him; and why may not the name of him who ruleth be here ſuppoſed to be given to the deacon, or him who giveth, in reference to his preſidency over the church-ſtock, though it makes him who ruleth, and him who giveth, the ſame office-bearer? But even though it were allowed that he who teaches, and he who exhorts, or, as ſome render it, who reproves and comforts, were the ſame office-bearer, and that he who giveth, and he who ſheweth mercy, were the ſame miniſter, it is plain that different branches of their office are referred to. He who teaches men the doctrines and duties of Chriſtianity performs a very different part from him who reproves, or comforts, or exhorts; and he who was appointed by the church to ſhew mercy in the various ways in which it was manifeſted in the primitive times to Chriſtian brethren, who were ſtrangers and in diſtreſs, certainly performed a very different duty from him who merely gave. If preſiding here, however, means preſiding over the church-ſtock, and if he who ruleth be the ſame with him who giveth, it is employing two expreſſions, in an enumera-

tion of things which are different, for *the very ſame part* of the office of the deacon. Beſides, it has been the opinion of many moſt reſpectable men, both among Preſbyterians and Independents, that he who taught, and he who exhorted, were not perſons who fulfilled only *different* parts of the *ſame* office, but perſons who diſcharged *offices entirely diſtinct*. The former, according to them, was the catechiſt or teacher, who prepared young perſons for perſonal admiſſion to the privilege of memberſhip, as well as the catechumens who had become converts from idolatry, or who publicly explained the truths of religion without diſpenſing privileges; the latter was the ſtated paſtor or biſhop *. And with regard to him who giveth, and him who ſheweth mercy, it is well known that it was the opinion of Beza † and Goodwin ‡, that they were either ſeparate offices, or parts of the ſame office, ſo diſtinct from each other, as that many, who could diſcharge the laſt, could not perform the firſt. By him who giveth, they underſtood the deacon, and by thoſe who ſhewed mercy, thoſe pious perſons whoſe employment it was, in the primitive times, to perform offices of mercy to Chriſtians who were ſtrangers, and were poor or afflicted. Of theſe office-bearers we have ſome account in 1 Tim. v. 9, 10. where, as Calvin remarks, though aged widows are particularly mentioned as intruſted with this office, the word τις, "*any one*," is uſed, and which, being either maſculine or feminine, ſhews that it might be communicated to men, perhaps ad-

* See Calvin's Inſtitutes; Beza upon the place; Owen on the Nature of a Goſpel-church, chap. vi.; Goodwin's Church-catechiſm, p. 16. where he expreſsly declares, "that the apoſtle makes them "*diſtinct* officers, and that they have their ſeveral works to attend "to, the paſtor not being to attend to the doctrine, nor the "teacher to exhortation."

† Conſult him upon the place.

‡ See his Catechiſm, p. 27.

vanced in age, as well as to women. Since then it appears that all the other phrases employed in this enumeration denote either *separate offices*, or *separate parts* of the same office, "he who ruleth" must signify also some office, or some part of an office, completely different from what is suggested by any of the other phrases. And since it cannot be explained as signifying him who presides over *the church-flock*, or as referring to *any* part of the deacon's office, without making it the same with him who giveth, or him who sheweth mercy, it appears naturally to follow that the rule or presidency here mentioned, must be a rule or presidency entirely different, and a rule which is the same with that of the elder who governs, though he does not teach.

M'Knight indeed asserts, that by him who ruleth seems to be designed the person who presided in his turn in the meetings of the church, and appointed those who were to speak for their edification, who, from the extraordinary gift of discerning spirits with which he was endowed, detected and prevented heretical teachers from ministering among them, and whose province it was, along with his fellow-presidents, to decide in those cases of *civil* controversy which happened among the saints. See 1 Cor. vi. 1, 2. But there appears to be no authority from scripture for such an office; and if this were admitted, then, even according to M'Knight, as we are informed in 1 Tim. v. 17. that there were some elders who presided or ruled well, and did not preach, it would elevate laymen above the pastor and teacher, and give them a power to prescribe to them in some cases their particular work. Besides, though it were granted that there was such an office, there seems to be no proper reason for limiting their power to the direction of the worship and services of the church, and the decision simply of *civil* controversies. There is a rule or presidency in the church much more im-

portant than what is mentioned by this expositor, a rule which extends to the dispensation of the privileges and the infliction of the punishments of this spiritual society. Would it not then be very extraordinary, if, in a professed enumeration of the *ordinary* offices which are instituted in it *, and which specifies the deacon and teacher, no notice should be taken of this very interesting function, by *whomsoever* it is to be exercised? Besides, as this interpretation supposes that a few of the laymen, conjoined with the pastors, decided not only in civil controversies, but fixed the labours of the ministers of the church, and even exercised the power of denying to heretical or apostate teachers, without consulting the brethren, the liberty of speaking or preaching in their assemblies, is not this conceding that a few of the members, together with the pastors, in *many important cases*, may govern the church? And, if they may exclude *the teachers* from the rights of *teachers*, why not also exclude the members, if they shew themselves unworthy of the privileges of members; and consequently will not the same institution be authorized by this interpretation for which Presbyterians contend, when they say that a few of the members who do not teach, together with the pastors, are authorized as elders to govern the church? Or is it said, that we may reject in part the interpretation of M'Knight, and maintain that the word denotes merely presidency, without supposing that the person who presided had any other power over those among whom he presided than that of a chairman or moderator, who simply states the vote, preserves order, and determines when the number on two sides is equal? It is

* That the apostle here is speaking only of ordinary offices seems evident, among other things, notwithstanding the unsubstantiated assertion of M'Knight to the contrary, from this consideration, that there is not one of them, as far as is here stated, for the discharge of which *one extraordinary* qualification was required.

replied, that the term, when it signifies to preside, as far as we know, uniformly denotes a much higher authority—an authority which entitles him to govern and direct those over whom he is placed, and not merely to sit as a moderator while they consult and determine. It is employed, for instance, in scripture, as was before observed, 1 Tim. iii. 4, 5. 12. to denote the authority connected with a Christian's presiding over or ruling *his family;* and in Tit. iii. 8. 14. to signify the command which he should exercise *over himself*, so as to excel in good works. It is used too, as was before remarked, by Thucydides, to signify the government of *a state*—προειστηκει του δημου, "he governed the people;" by Aristotle, in his Polit. lib. iii. cap. x. according to Constantinus in his Lexicon, in the same sense—προειστηκεσαν αυτων, "they governed them; by Xenophon, in his Œconomics, in a similar acceptation—προστατης σεαυτου πατριδος, "who presidest over, or governest thy country;" by Herodotus, for the superintendent of the armory or arsenal—της ὁπλοθηκης προεστηκως, "having been set over the armory; by the same writer, for the magistrates or governors of cities—πρωεστωτες των πολεων; by Plato, in his Epistles (Epist. vii.), in the same sense—μεγαλης προεστως πολεως, "the prefect or governor of a great "city;" and by Demosthenes pro Corona, in a similar acceptation—και μεγιστων δη πραγματων προστας, "set even "over the greatest matters, or having the supreme "power." Now, since the word, as far as we know, signifies not merely to preside over an assembly, who, as rulers, are vested with an *equality* of power with the president himself (the point of preserving order alone excepted), and can even make determinations which can authoritatively bind him no less than themselves, how can it be supposed that, in the present passage, it is to be taken in this acceptation, and that a number of men would be said to *preside as governors* over the church,

agreeably to this ſtrong expreſſion, when all that is meant is only that they ſat as chairmen in their meetings, and preſerved order, while, in every other point, they were more completely ſubject to the power of the members than the members were to that of the preſidents? But if, as we are here taught, there be a claſs of men who are to rule in the church, not merely as chairmen and moderators, but as governors, in whom alone, together with the paſtors, the adminiſtration is veſted; and if theſe men, as is here aſſerted, be diſtinguiſhed from the paſtor, the teacher, the deacon, and thoſe who, in the primitive times, ſhewed mercy; are we not warranted to affirm that there muſt be a claſs of elders who rule and do not teach?

The ſecond of thoſe paſſages urged by Preſbyterians in ſupport of this poſition, is one to which I have already ſolicited your attention, namely, 1 Cor. xii. 28. That the apoſtle, in this place, is enumerating not merely the extraordinary, as M Knight affirms, but alſo the ordinary offices in the church, muſt be evident from the compariſon inſtituted between the offices of the church and the offices of all the different members of the body. In ſpeaking of the latter, the feeble as well as the ſtrong, ver. 22. and the leſs honourable as well as the more honourable members are ſpecified, ver. 21. Now, if Paul, when reprobating the Corinthian office-bearers for all aſpiring at the higheſt functions, tells them that it was as unſeemly as if all the members of the natural body ſhould ſeek to be an eye, or an ear, or a ſenſe of ſmelling (ver. 17. *&c.*); and if, when ſpeaking of the variety which, for the wiſeſt purpoſes, was appointed in the body, he mentions not only the ſtronger and more honourable, but the *feebler* and *leſs honourable* members; would it not be unaccountable, if, in detailing the correſponding diverſity of offices which is fitly inſtituted in the church of Chriſt, he ſpecified thoſe only which are *extraordinary* and *more exalt-*

ed? But if the ordinary as well as extraordinary miniſters be mentioned, have we reaſon to believe that among the former, are included the elder who rules and does not teach?

That ſuch was the opinion of the venerable Chryſoſtom, one of the moſt diſtinguiſhed of the Chriſtian fathers, appears to be undeniable. He underſtands by "the "helpers," or αντιλήψεις*, "illi qui pauperes ſuſciperent," *i. e.* "thoſe who took care of the poor;" and by "the "governments," or κυβερνήσεις, "illi qui præeſſent, et "curam gererent, et res ſpirituales adminiſtrarent," *i. e.* "thoſe who preſided over, and managed and go-"verned the ſpiritual concerns of the church." And in this opinion he is followed not only by modern Preſbyterians, but by Owen, as well as many of the moſt reſpectable of the Independents. And that this interpretation is founded in truth, ſeems evident from an impartial review of the paſſage. That the apoſtle, in enumerating the different offices which exiſt in the church, ſpecifies not merely ſome which are extraordinary, but others which are *ordinary*, we have already proved; and that in aſcertaining which of theſe offices are ordinary, and which of them are extraordinary, we are to be guided by their nature, and by the common repreſentations of them in ſcripture, appears to be no leſs evident. Judging then by theſe principles, it would ſeem that while among the extraordinary offices, are to be claſſed thoſe of apoſtles, and prophets, and workers of miracles, among the ordinary, are to be comprehended teachers, and helps, and governments. Theſe are not only, in their own nature, ſtanding offices, which are continually requiſite for the edification of the church, and require no miraculous gifts for their performance, but are always pointed out in ſcripture as ordinary offices. It has indeed been aſſerted

* See his Thirty-firſt Homily.

by M'Knight, that by the teacher here, we are to underſtand an extraordinary miniſter, becauſe in 1 Cor. xiv. 6. the doctrine or teaching there mentioned, means doctrine or teaching by inſpiration. But though it were granted (and nothing more is there mentioned) that an *apoſtle*, or other extraordinary miniſter, *ſometimes* taught by inſpiration, it is certain that the term teacher, in the New Teſtament, commonly ſignifies an *ordinary* miniſter, who had no ſupernatural powers *. It has been contended moreover, by that expoſitor, that by helps, or helpers, appear to be meant inſpired brethren, who, ſpeaking occaſionally to the edification of the church, aſſiſted the apoſtles and elders in their miniſtrations. But while it may juſtly be queſtioned whether any but the miniſters of the church poſſeſſed theſe miraculous gifts for teaching, and while we never hear of ſuch perſons being helps to the apoſtles, we know that deacons, at the period of their inſtitution, were expreſsly appointed to aſſiſt them in their work, and to free them from the labour of ſerving tables. It has alſo been maintained, that by governments are meant, perſons endowed with miraculous gifts, who preſided in the meetings, and directed the affairs of the primitive church. But we hear, in the New Teſtament, of no ſuch inſpired officers who were preſidents of the church. In the account which is given (Acts xv.) of the conſultation at Jeruſalem, upon the reference from Antioch, it was not merely the preſident, but the rulers at large, who ſpoke and adviſed; and if, as is evident from the principles both of Independents and Preſbyterians, any of the other members may ſet aſide any propoſal ſuggeſted by the preſident, and, if he is able to ſupport it by ſuperior reaſoning, may introduce and carry any meaſure of his

* It is plain, too, that as teachers are here diſtinguiſhed from apoſtles, and prophets, and other inſpired inſtructors, they can here denote only ordinary miniſters.

own, I cannot see how the former are entitled to the name of governments, or governors, rather than the latter. Since by governments, or governors, all who were entitled to administer the church are intended, and since, as far at least as is mentioned in the New Testament, it was not necessary for this purpose that those who were appointed to it should be furnished with any extraordinary gifts, it appears plain that the governments, who are here mentioned, were *ordinary* officers. And as they are stated as different from teachers and helps, we are warranted to infer that they are a class of elders distinct from the pastors, and teachers, and deacons, and are merely to rule in the church of Christ.

Here then is another testimony to the divine authority of the elder who rules and does not preach. Government in itself, as well as according to the uniform representation of it delivered in the New Testament, is an office for which no miraculous powers are requisite, and an office which is always necessary in the church. It is therefore an ordinary and standing office. It is an office which is here said to be given to some only, and, therefore, in no form ought to be committed to all. It is an office which is vested neither upon the principles of Independents nor Presbyterians in the president alone, for every member of the court has as much, if not more, a voice and power than the president himself. And it is an office, moreover, completely distinct from that of the teacher, and is represented as exercised by some who are entitled to discharge no higher function. In other words, it is an office which may be discharged by elders who do not teach.

Is it said in answer to this, that the apostle speaks here of gifts, not of offices? It is replied, that as there is an office in the natural body corresponding to the gifts bestowed by the Creator upon any of the members, so, though it were granted that the apostle speaks here only

of gifts for government, it would follow from the comparison introduced in the context, that there must be *an office* in the former for the exercise of these gifts. And, in short, as these gifts are bestowed upon many who are destitute of talents for being teachers or pastors, though admirably adapted for the office of governors, it appears no less obvious, even from this very objection, that there must be a class of elders distinct from the pastors.

Is it urged, that helps, by whom we understand deacons, are placed *before* governments, which would not be the case, if by governments were intended ruling elders, since the latter are unquestionably superior to the former? It is answered, that the sacred writers frequently pay little attention to this mode of expressing rank and dignity. Nay, this same apostle, in the 10th verse of this very chapter, though he mentions prophets, in the passage before us, as the *second* of the offices in the Christian church, places the gift of prophecy *after* the gifts of healing and other inferior gifts; and though, in this passage too, he states the gifts of miracles before gifts of healing, in the 9th verse he introduces the latter before the former. It seems obvious then, that since this very apostle, in this very chapter, mentions repeatedly offices which are inferior before offices which are confessedly greatly superior, no argument can be adduced from the position of helps, or the office of deacons, before governments or governors, against explaining the latter of ruling elders, because the former are inferior to the latter in dignity.

LETTER XI.

SIR,

THE laſt, however, and moſt deciſive argument for this order of elders is contained in 1 Tim. v. 17.; "a text," according to the opinion of Dr. Owen, "of uncontroul-"able evidence, if it had any thing but prejudice and "intereſt to contend with. On the firſt propoſal of "this text," ſays he, p. 246. "that *the elders who rule* "*well are worthy of double honour, eſpecially thoſe who* "*labour in the word and doctrine*, a rational man who is "unprejudiced, who never heard of the controverſy "about ruling elders, can hardly avoid an apprehenſion "that there are two ſorts of elders, ſome that labour in "the word and doctrine, and ſome who do not ſo do. "The truth is, it was intereſt and prejudice that firſt "cauſed ſome learned men to ſtrain their wits to find "out evaſions from the evidence of this teſtimony: being "ſo found, ſome others, of meaner abilities, have been "entangled by them. For there is not one new argu-"ment advanced in this cauſe" (and no new arguments have been offered by Independents ſince his day), "not "one exception given in unto the ſenſe of the place "which we plead for, but what has long ſince been "coined by Papiſts and Prelatiſts, and managed with "better colours than ſome now are able to lay on them "who pretend to the ſame judgment."

Nor is the language of Dr. Whitaker, though a zealous Epiſcopalian, leſs ſtrong and decided with regard to this paſſage. "By theſe words," ſays he, in his Prælection. apud Didioclav. p. 681. ex Sheervodio, "the "apoſtle evidently diſtinguiſhes between the biſhops and "the inſpectors of the church. If all who rule well be "worthy of double honour, *eſpecially* they who labour "in the word and doctrine, it is plain that there were

" ſome who did not ſo labour: for if all had been of this " deſcription, the meaning would have been abſurd; " but the word *eſpecially* points out a difference. If I " ſhould ſay that all they who ſtudy well at the univer- " ſity are worthy of double honour, *eſpecially they who* " *labour in the ſtudy of theology*, I muſt either mean that " *all* do not apply themſelves to *the ſtudy of theology*, or " *I ſhould ſpeak nonſenſe*. Wherefore I confeſs that to be " the moſt genuine ſenſe by which paſtors and teachers " are diſtinguiſhed from thoſe who only governed, " Rom. xii. 8.; of whom we read in Ambroſe upon " 1 Tim. v. 17." Illis verbis diſerte diſtinguit apoſtolus inter epiſcopos et inſpectores eccleſiæ. Si omnes duplici honore ſint digni qui bene præſunt, maxime ii qui laborant in ſermone et doctrina, perſpicuum eſt fuiſſe aliquos qui non laborarunt. Nam ſi omnes fuiſſent tales, ſenſus fuiſſet abſurdus, ſed μαλιστα ponit diſcrimen. Si dicerem omnes academici qui bene ſtudent, ſunt duplici honore digni, maxime ii qui laborant in ſtudio theologiæ, vel innuo non omnes incumbere ſtudio theologiæ, vel inſulſe loquor. Quamobrem fateor illum eſſe ſenſum maxime genuinum quo paſtores et doctores diſcernuntur ab aliis qui ſolum gubernabant, Rom. xii. 8. de quibus in Ambroſio legimus 1 Tim. v. 17. And ſays Dr. Whitby on this paſſage, though no leſs rigid an Epiſcopalian, " The elders of the " Jews were of *two* ſorts: 1ſt, Such as *governed* in the " ſynagogue; and 2dly, Such as miniſtered in *reading* and " *expounding* their ſcriptures, *&c.* And theſe the apoſtle " here declares to be the moſt honourable, and worthy of " the chiefeſt reward. Accordingly the apoſtle, reckoning " up the offices God had appointed in the church, places " teachers before governments: 1 Cor. xii."

Here, then, even according to the conceſſions of ſome of the enemies of Preſbytery, *two* claſſes of elders are mentioned, one who rule well, and, on account of it,

are worthy of double honour, and one who not only rule, but labour alſo in the word and doctrine, and are more eſpecially worthy of double honour.

To this interpretation however a number of objections have been urged by Epiſcopalians, and repeated by Independents, but all of them intended to ſupport explications too forced and abſtruſe to preſent themſelves readily to a candid reader. Some, for inſtance, with the famous Joſeph Mede, have contended that by thoſe who rule well, are intended ſubordinate civil magiſtrates. But we know that there was not one Chriſtian magiſtrate at that period in the church, nor for ſome hundred years after this Epiſtle was written; and were Chriſtian magiſtrates the rulers here referred to, it would be a neceſſary conſequence, that as thoſe who labour in the word and doctrine are repreſented in this verſe as more worthy than the firſt of double maintenance or honour, they ought to have a more liberal appointment than the civil magiſtrates. Others have maintained, that by thoſe who ruled well, were to be underſtood ſuperannuated biſhops, who, though they might aſſiſt in government, could not teach; and that by thoſe who laboured in the word and doctrine, are meant the younger miniſters, who were fit for the vigorous diſcharge of this office *. But how could theſe elders rule well, who were ſo ſuperannuated that they could not preach? And if the *younger* miniſters received greater honour and maintenance than thoſe who had become old in the cauſe of Chriſt, and had ſpent their ſtrength and years in his ſervice, would not this indeed be a moſt unſuitable return for their zeal and labours? How then, according to the obſervation of Solomon, could their gray hairs be to them a crown of glory, though found in the ways of righteouſneſs?

* See Biſhop King's Sermon on Canticles viii.

Others have alleged *, that by the elders who rule well, are signified the *ſtated* paſtors of the church, and by thoſe who *laboured* in the word and doctrine, evangeliſts who itinerated for the diffuſion of the goſpel. But it is a fact which is inconteſtable, that in 1 Theſſ. v. 12. τους κοπιωντας, "thoſe who *laboured* in that church, and "were *over them* in the Lord," was the name given to their ſtated paſtors; and conſequently that interpretation which would repreſent thoſe who *laboured* in the word and doctrine as evangeliſts, and thoſe who ruled well as *ſtated paſtors*, muſt be totally groundleſs.

Some, in ſhort, with Sutclive de Preſbyterio, p. 75. affirm, that the word here rendered "eſpecially" (μαλιστα), ſhould be tranſlated "much;" and that the apoſtle, inſtead of naming *two* claſſes of elders, only aſſigns the reaſon why thoſe whom he had mentioned as ruling well ſhould receive double honour: "Let the elders who rule "well," ſay they, his words ſhould be rendered, "be "counted worthy of double honour, they labouring," *i. e.* becauſe they labour "*much* in the word and doc-"trine." But upon this it is obſerved, that it would be for *preaching alone* and not for ruling, according to this interpretation, that the honour would be claimed; and can we ſuppoſe for a moment, that no honour is to be the reward of ruling aright? Beſides, as the learned Calderwood, in his Altare Damaſcenum, p. 919. has remarked, had this been the meaning of the apoſtle, he would not have ſaid μαλιστα οι κοπιωντες, but οι μαλιστα κοπιωντες, or μαλιστα κοπιωντες; *i. e.* "Let the elders be "counted worthy of double honour who rule well, la-"bouring greatly, or they labouring greatly in the "word and doctrine," and not as the preſent arrangement of the Greek words ſuggeſts, "Let the elders be "counted worthy of double honour who rule well,

* See Bilſon on Church-government, p. 135.

" *especially* they who labour in word and doctrine." Besides, in every other similar passage where the word (here translated *especially*) occurs, it uniformly means a distinction of *two persons* or *things*. Thus, in this very chapter, ver. 8. " If any man provide not for his own, " and *especially* for those of his own house, *&c.*" where, though the neglect of one's own is condemned, the neglect of one's nearest relatives is evidently held out as *much more* reprehensible. Thus too, chap. iv. ver. 10. " Who is the Saviour," or, as the word should here be rendered, " the Preserver of all men, *especially* of " them who believe," where two classes of persons are obviously distinguished. Thus likewise, 2 Tim. iv. 13. " Bring the books, *especially* the parchments;" and Gal. vi. 10. " Let us do good to all men, but *especially* " unto the household of faith." See also Philip. iv. 22. Titus i. 10. 2 Peter ii. 9, 10. and Acts xx. 39. which are all the parallel instances, as far as I have discovered, where it occurs in the New Testament, and in all of which it marks a distinction between two classes of persons or things. Now, when we see the apostle, in the passages before us, after speaking of elders who rule well, insert this very word between these and elders who are engaged in preaching, is it not plain that he intended to suggest by it here, as in all these other instances, *two* classes of persons, some who ruled well and did not teach, and others who taught as well as ruled?

In answer to this, let it not be objected that the particle δε, " but," is not in this passage subjoined to μαλιστα, " especially," as it ought to have been, had the latter word, as we contend, signified *especially*. It is not to be found in a number of the passages quoted above, where, however, the word here translated " especially," can admit only of that meaning. Thus, in 1 Tim. iv. 10. " Who is the Preserver of all men, *especially* of them who " believe"—not " *but especially*," μαλιστα πιστων, not μαλιστα

δε πιστων. And thus too, in Titus i. 10. " For there are " many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, *especially* " they of the circumcision"—not " *but especially*," μαλιστα οι, not μαλιστα δε οι εκ περιτομης. Accordingly the old Hebrew translators have rendered μαλιστα, in 1 Tim. v. 17. which, in our version, is translated " especially," by a word which signifies, in connection with κοπιωντες, " emi- " nently they who labour in word and doctrine;" the Syriac version by another, which signifies " chiefly or " principally they" who do so; and the Old Latin Ver- sion or Vulgate, by *maxime*, a term of the same import. Hence it would seem that the apostle, in the latter clause, is not pointing out merely a reason why the elders who ruled well should receive double honour, but clearly distinguishing, by the term μαλιστα, " especially," two classes of elders, one who ruled and did not teach, and one who taught as well as ruled.

Others, with Bilson, in his Treatise on Church-government, p. 133, and Tilenus, in his Paræneſ. cap. xi. admit that a *distinction* is here stated, but contend that it is not between elders in *different offices*, but between *dif- ferent* elders in the *same* office. All elders, they tell us, teach and rule, but there are some who are distinguished for their *extraordinary labours* in the cause of Christ, and it is to them they apprehend that the apostle refers, when he speaks of those who " labour" (κοπιωντες) in word and doctrine. The meaning of Paul therefore, according to them, is, " Let the elders who rule well, " and who teach, be counted worthy of double honour, " especially they who are noted for their extraordinary " exertions in the word and doctrine." This interpre- tation, too, has been generally adopted by the Independ- ents, as it is by your brother Mr. Ballentine, in his late publication, p. 88. It is probable however, that had this been the meaning of the apostle, he would have said, " Let the elders who rule and *preach well* be count-

" ed worthy of double honour, especially they who la-
" bour in the word and doctrine." But instead of this, we see that he has simply said, " Let the elders who *rule* " *well* be counted worthy of double honour, especially " they who labour in the word and doctrine." Besides, though the word κοπιαω denotes greater labour than πονεω, and labour which, in one view, may be called *extraordinary*, this is nothing more than what is represented in scripture as the duty of *every one* who is a teaching elder. It is employed by Paul, 1 Cor. iii. 8. to signify the *common* duty of every teaching elder: " Now he that planteth," says he, " and he that watereth, are both one; and *every* " *man* shall receive his *own* reward, *according to his* " *labour*, κοπον." And, says he, 1 Thess. v. 12, 13. " Know them which *labour* among you, and are over " you in the Lord," where it is represented as the *common* duty and work of all the teachers. Thus, too, it is expressive of the *common* duty and work of all the Old-Testament teachers. John iv. 38. " I sent you to reap " that whereon you bestowed no *labour*: others have " *laboured*, and ye have entered into their *labours*"— where the verb and noun which are used by Paul occur no less than thrice. And, in short, we know that when the apostle intends to express *unusual* exertion, he employs another word *besides* κοπιαω. Thus, when he speaks of the *extraordinary* exertions of Mary and Persis to promote the gospel in their private stations, he expresses it not merely by κοπιαω, but by πολλα ἐκοπιασαν, " they " laboured *much*:" Rom. xvi. 6. 13. And when he mentions his own *extraordinary* exertions, 1 Cor. xv. 10. he says, that " he laboured (περισσοτερον) *more abundantly*." And especially when he designs to convey this idea in the most forcible manner, he couples this term with a word which signifies not merely, like κοπος, labour connected with care and anxiety, but agreeably to the

obſervation of the very able Zanchius on 1 Theſſ. ii. 9.* which combines beſides this, the idea of *completely fatiguing* and *overpowering* the perſon. Thus, in 2 Cor. xi. 27. in enumerating his hardſhips, he ſpeaks of himſelf as having been "in *wearineſs* and *painfulneſs*," or, as it ſhould more literally be rendered, "in labour and "wearifomeneſs," κοπον και μοχθον. So alſo, in 1 Theſſ. ii. 9. he ſays, "For ye remember, brethren, our labour "and travel," or, as it more properly means, "our la-"bour *and wearifomeneſs*," κοπον και μοχθον. Since κοπιαω then, as we have ſeen, which is tranſlated, in 1 Tim. v. 17. "to labour," properly ſignifies the *common* duty and work of every teacher, and ſince the apoſtle, when he intends to denote an *extraordinary* exertion, couples it with ſuch words as "much" (πολλα), or "more abun-"dantly" (περισσοτερον), it ſeems plain that, in this paſſage, the elders who are ſaid to labour in word and doctrine, are not perſons who make extraordinary exertions in preaching, but ſimply ſuch as perform the *common* duties of teaching elders. But if *two* kinds of elders be mentioned in that paſſage, and if thoſe who labour in the word and doctrine be ſuch as are engaged only in the *common* duties of teaching elders, does it not follow, agreeably to the introductory clauſe of the verſe, that there are to be elders in the church *diſtinct* from the former, and who, when they *merely rule well*, though they do not teach, are entitled, on account of it, to double honour?

Others, in fine, have aſſerted with Downham, and Sutcliffe, and other ancient Epiſcopalians, that the word τιμη, here tranſlated *honour*, denotes not merely honour,

* Κοπος non eſt ſimplex labor, ſed labor cum ſumma cura et ſolicitudine conjunctus; μοχθος amplius addit: eſt enim labor, non ſolum ſolicitudinem, ſed etiam defatigationem conjunctam habens. Cum enim quis diu multumque operatus eſt, ſolet, laboris mole preſſus, defatigari.

but, as appears from a Homily of Chryſoſtom on the paſſage, and the Expoſitions of Calvin, and Beza, and Bullinger, as well as the following verſe, maintenance alſo. But if it mean maintenance, and if two kinds of elders be mentioned, each of them muſt be entitled to double or proper maintenance, a circumſtance which, in their view, would be extremely inconſiſtent. On this objection alſo Mr. Ballentine lays conſiderable ſtreſs, and urges it againſt Preſbyterians with abundance of confidence. But I do not ſee on what principle it is inconſiſtent with the tenets of Preſbyterians to grant even to lay-elders proper maintenance, if their circumſtances require it, or if at any time they are called from their employments to the buſineſs of the church longer than their ſecular intereſts permit. Beſides, it is evident from the diſtinction which is here ſtated between elders who only rule, and elders who teach and give themſelves wholly to their ſacred vocation, that attention is, in the firſt place, to be paid to the maintenance of the latter. The former, if they need it, are to receive maintenance; but it is *eſpecially* to be given to ſuch as preach, and have no other means of procuring ſubſiſtence. If, after they are provided for, the church is able to compenſate the lay-elders for that time which they devote to her particular buſineſs, ſhe is bound to do it. Is it objected to this reaſoning, as has often been done by Independents*, that the terms elder and biſhop are applied in ſcripture to the ſame individuals, and as every biſhop is required by Paul (1 Tim. iii. 2.) to be "apt to teach," none ſhould be elders who are not public teachers? It is replied, that ſuch an inference is not deducible from the paſſage All that is aſſerted in it appears ſimply to be this, that an elder, or biſhop, ſhould be fitted to teach, according to the ſtation which he holds in the church.

* See Sandeman's Letter to Mr. Wilſon.

The preaching elder ſhould be qualified to teach publicly, according to the nature of his particular function; and the ruling elder ſhould be qualified to teach, and admoniſh, and counſel privately, according to the particular nature of his office. But becauſe an elder, or biſhop, ſhould be apt to teach, *according to the particular nature of his office*, can it fairly be inferred that none are to be elders but thoſe who are qualified to be preachers of the goſpel?

If it is ſtill contended, that as *all* the elders of the church of Epheſus are commanded by Paul (Acts xx. 28.) to feed that church, they muſt all have been miniſters of the word, becauſe it is the province of the miniſter, and not of the ruling elder, to feed the church? It is anſwered, that though lay-elders cannot feed the church by public inſtructions like the teaching elder, they may undoubtedly do ſo in their private capacity, by that information, and counſel, and comfort, which they may communicate to the members. Beſides, the word here tranſlated "feed," frequently means to rule, as a ſhepherd does his flock, as was before obſerved *, which is done by them no leſs than by the former. If the word then be tranſlated *to feed*, it is obvious that the lay-elders might be enjoined by the apoſtle to perform this duty as well as the miniſters, becauſe they were no leſs bound to feed the church by their private inſtructions, than the former were bound to do ſo by their public diſcourſes; and if it be rendered *to rule*, it is evident that they were no leſs admitted to diſcharge this office than the teachers themſelves. It cannot therefore be evinced from the preſent paſſage, that there ought not to be an order of elders in the church, who barely rule, diſtinct from the elders who rule and teach.

In ſhort, even conceding that, in both of theſe inſtances, the terms refer to *public* teaching only, it cannot be inferred that becauſe *elders in general* are called thus

* See Note, p. 56.

to teach and feed, there are not other elders, who, though they govern the church, cannot perform these duties. General declarations, of whatever kind, very frequently admit of particular exceptions. It is said, for example, respecting *the whole of the tribe of Levi* in general (Deut. xxxiii. 8. 10.), that "they should teach "Jacob God's judgments, and Israel his law: that they "should *put incense* before him, and whole burnt sacrifice "upon his altar." And, agreeably to this, we are told that Jehoshaphat, when he had convened them upon a particular occasion (2 Chron. xxix. 5.), thus addressed *all* of them (ver. 11.), "My sons, be not now "negligent, for the Lord hath chosen you to stand "before him, to serve him, and that you should minister unto him, and *burn incense*." Though *all* of them however are said, in the one passage, to have been originally appointed to burn incense before God, and though *all* of them are commanded to do so in the other, yet we know, from other passages, that there were *many* of the Levites who, though employed in the service of the ancient sanctuary, were not authorized to perform this part of the sacerdotal function. Allowing then that it could even be proved that *elders in general* are required by Paul to be apt to preach, and that *the whole* of the elders in the church of Ephesus are apparently enjoined to perform this function (and this cannot be demonstrated), if it can be evinced, from *other passages*, that there should be a class of elders who are merely to rule and not to preach, it will no more follow, from these general injunctions, that these should not exist in every church, than it will follow, from the passages before produced, that none were connected with the tribe of Levi, or admitted to minister in the ancient sanctuary, but such as burned incense.

On the whole, as this separate order of elders seems clearly to be authorized by the sacred oracles, so it ap-

pears from the writings of the primitive fathers, that even from the earlieſt ages it exiſted in the church. In the year 103, we meet with theſe words in the very ſame ſentence of the Geſta Purgationis Cæciliani et Felicis: " Preſbyteri, diacones, et ſeniores, *i. e.* The preſbyters or " paſtors, the deacons and elders;" and a little after that, " Adhibete conclericos et ſeniores plebis, eccle- " ſiaſticos viros, et inquirant diligenter quæ ſint iſtæ " diſſenſiones, *i. e.* Add the fellow-clergymen and *elders* " of the people, eccleſiaſtical men, and let them in- " quire diligently what are theſe diſſenſions." In that aſſembly likewiſe, different letters were produced and read: one addreſſed, " Clero et ſenioribus, *i. e.* To the " clergymen and the elders;" and another, " Clericis " et ſenioribus, *i. e.* To the clergymen and the elders." Origen too, who flouriſhed only a little more than 200 years after Chriſt, has theſe expreſſions in the third book of his Treatiſe againſt Celſus: " There are *ſome rulers* " appointed who may inquire concerning *the converſation* " and *manners* of thoſe that are admitted, that they may " debar from the congregation ſuch as commit filthineſs." But does not this contain a moſt accurate deſcription of one important part of the office of the elder who is barely to rule? Cyprian moreover, biſhop of Carthage, who lived about 240 years after Chriſt, in his Thirty-ninth Epiſtle, book iv. (according to the edition of Goulart), writing to his preſbyters, and elders, and people, reſpect- ing one Numidicus, enjoins that he ſhould be reckoned with the preſbyters of that church, and ſhould ſit with *the clergy*, to make up their Preſbytery. And yet it would ſeem that it was only as a ruling, and not a teaching preſbyter, that he was to be received by them: for he adds, " Et promovebitur quidem, cum Deus per- " miſerit, ad *ampliorem locum* religionis ſuæ, quando in " præſentiam protegente Domino veneritus; *i. e.* And " indeed, if it be the will of God, he ſhall be promoted

" to a *more diſtinguiſhed* place of his religion, or religious " function, when, through the Lord's protection, we " ſhall arrive." But what more honourable place could he attain, if he was already a teaching elder, and conſequently, at that period, next to the biſhop? In the paſſage before quoted, from the Commentaries of Ambroſe, upon 1 Tim. v. 1. the teſtimony which is given to the exiſtence, in the church, of an order of elders who merely ruled, and were diſtinct from thoſe who alſo preached, is ſtrong and pointed. He ſhews, that by the elders or ſeniores, of whom he ſpeaks, he does not mean only a few of the more aged and experienced of the members, for he compares them to the elders in *the Jewiſh ſynagogue*, and attributes to them an equality of power, and we know that the latter were not merely private members of the ſynagogue, venerable for their wiſdom as well as age, but *elders by office*. He diſcovers alſo no leſs clearly, that he does not intend ſimply, by the elders to whom he refers, perſons whoſe opinion was *occaſionally* conſulted in difficult matters, for he ſays expreſsly, that " without their counſel *nothing* was done in the church: " Unde et ſynagoga et poſtea eccleſia ſeniores habuit, " *quorum ſine conſilio nihil agebatur in eccleſia.*" And that theſe elders likewiſe were admitted not only to ſtate their opinion and deliver their advice, but to rule with an authority not inferior to that of the clergy, he no leſs plainly declares; for he aſcribes to the pride and ambition of the teachers, the diſcontinuance of this order in a number of places, which, while it remained amongſt them, curbed the former, and ſet bounds to the latter. But how could theſe elders have reſtrained their ambition, and prevented their undue aſſumptions of power, if they were permitted in the ancient church, to deliver an advice only, which might be adopted or rejected by the clergy at pleaſure? Indeed ſo incontrovertible did this teſtimony for the exiſtence of this order of office-bearers, in

the ancient church, appear to many who were opponents of Preſbytery, that it was not only admitted, as we have already ſeen, by ſome of the more candid of the ancient Epiſcopalians, but by ſome of the moſt reſpectable even of the Independents themſelves. Among theſe is included, Mr. Cotton of America, already mentioned, who, in his Way of the Churches in New England, cap. ii. ſect. ii. p. 30. acknowledges it to be a clear and irreſiſtible proof of the exiſtence of this order in the ancient church, and vindicates the argument which he adduces from this paſſage, for the neceſſity of this order even in *Independent churches*, from the exceptions and cavils of ſome of his brethren and others. And, in fine, Auguſtine, biſhop of Hippo, who lived about the year 420, often refers to theſe elders in his writings. Thus, in his Treatiſe againſt Creſconius, lib. iii. cap. lvi. "Peregrinus preſbyter et ſeniores Muſticanæ regionis, "*i. e.* Peregrine the preſbyter, and *the elders* of the "Muſtican diſtrict," where he obviouſly diſtinguiſhes between the paſtor or preſbyter who taught, and ſeparate elders or ſeniors. Thus, alſo, he addreſſes one of his letters to his church at Hippo (Epiſt. cxxxix.), "Dilec-"tiſſimis fratribus, clero, ſenioribus, et univerſæ plebi "eccleſiæ Hipponenſis, *i. e.* To the beloved brethren, "the clergy, or clergyman, the elders, and all the "people of the church at Hippo," where he makes an obvious diſcrimination between the clergy, or clergyman, the elders, and the people. And were it thought requiſite, it would be eaſy to bring forward other teſtimonies from Euſebius, and Iſidore, and Jerome, and others, no leſs clearly demonſtrative of the exiſtence of this order in the primitive church. What has already been ſtated however, appears ſufficiently to eſtabliſh the fact; and conſequently we ſeem equally authorized by theſe documents to affirm that this order obtained in the ages which ſucceeded the apoſtles, as we ſeem to be authorized by rea-

ſon to affirm that it is neceſſary, and by ſcripture to maintain that it is divinely appointed.

To contend then with ſome Independents, that every congregation ſhould not be governed by what has been denominated by Preſbyterians a Seſſion, becauſe the term does not occur in the ſacred volume, though the doctrine ſeems to be undeniable, muſt be fooliſh and contradictory. Upon the ſame principle it would follow, according to the reaſonings of Socinians and Arminians, that becauſe the terms Trinity, ſatisfaction, original ſin, efficacious grace, particular redemption, are not to be found in the ſacred oracles, theſe doctrines are merely inventions of men. If Independents however, as well as others, admit theſe doctrines, becauſe they are revealed in ſcripture, though theſe particular terms are not there employed to denote them, on the ſame principle is it not plain that if it be taught in ſcripture that only *ſome*, and not *all the members indiſcriminately*, are authorized to govern a particular congregation, and that among theſe are included elders who do not teach, but ſimply rule, as well as elders who not only rule but teach, the doctrine of Seſſions is clearly eſtabliſhed, though *that particular word* is not to be met with in the ſacred volume?

LETTER XII.

SIR,

THE laſt point of government in which you differ from Preſbyterians, is their courts of *review*; or the ſubordination of a particular congregation, with its elders, to the authoritative inſpection and controul of a Preſbytery, and of a Preſbytery to that of a Synod and Aſſembly. It is propoſed accordingly, agreeably to our method, to

conclude these inquiries upon this part of the subject, with the consideration of this distinguishing principle of Presbytery, with the different objections which you have advanced against it.

With regard to the propriety of ecclesiastical courts superior to the rulers of a particular congregation, much diversity of sentiment has obtained even among Independents. Some, in the greatness of their zeal against Presbytery, have maintained that it is unlawful for an Independent congregation, even in a difficult case, to convene the pastors of any other churches merely to ask their advice. Such a measure, in their opinion*, would be prejudicial to the improvement of the members in knowledge, for if they were assured that in every case of difficulty and importance they might have recourse to this superior assembly, though merely for *counsel*, it would make them less eager to advance in an acquaintance with the truths and laws of Christ. Every separate church therefore, according to them, must be completely independent even of *the assistance* of others, and must not solicit, in *any* instance, the advice of their office-bearers met in a collective or associated capacity. It seems obvious however, that before this reasoning can be considered as valid, it must be proved that *infallibility* has been the attainment of every Independent congregation; or why should it refuse to apply for assistance, in any arduous or interesting case, to an assembly of the office-bearers of other churches? Or, if infallibility be disclaimed by them, it should be demonstrated that though they *may* err, it is better for them to do so, since they have the satisfaction of being regarded as the unassisted arbiters in all their affairs, than to be prevented from this evil, by being aided by the opinion and counsel of others. And, in short, upon the same principle that it

* See Missionary Magazine for October 1804, p. 448.

is affirmed that the members of a particular congregation ought not to apply to others for advice, becauſe it may abate their zeal to improve in knowledge ſo as to be enabled to decide in every cauſe, it may be proved that the offence mentioned by our Saviour in Matth. xviii. ſhould be finally determined by the *two* or *three* brethren before whom it is enjoined to be firſt told, and ought not to be announced to the church at all. If announced to the church for their examination and judgment, may it not, if the preceding argument were juſt, diminiſh the motives which are preſented to each of *the members individually* to endeavour to improve, ſo as to be himſelf qualified, with the aſſiſtance of a ſingle brother, finally to decide a cauſe? And, upon the ſame ground alſo, is it not manifeſt that there ſhould be no ſubordination in *civil* courts, becauſe, if this principle be admitted, it would make the members of the loweſt of ſuch aſſociations leſs eager to improve in juridical knowledge, than if they knew that, in every inſtance, they were to depend ſolely on their own judgment and ſagacity, and were not to ſolicit the aſſiſtance of others?

While ſuch however are the ſentiments of others, you profeſs to hold a very oppoſite opinion, and admit at once the lawfulneſs and the utility of the aſſociations of the paſtors of a number of churches to deliberate in points of intricacy and magnitude. The power however which you grant to theſe aſſociations is purely conſultative, and differs not only from that degree of authority which is allowed by Preſbyterians to a Preſbytery, over the governors of a particular congregation, and to a Synod, over the members of a particular Preſbytery, but even from what was veſted by the reſpectable ancient Independents, already quoted, in their occaſional Synods. Not only does Mr. Hooker acknowledge, in his Survey, p. 4. chap. i. ii. that the aſſociation of the paſtors of different congregations, in one court or Preſbytery, is lawful

and beneficial, and not only does he grant that they may be of "*different* sorts and degrees, some leſſer, some "greater, Claſſes, Synods, and theſe *Provincial*, *National*, "*OEcumenical* or *Univerſal*;" but his brother Mr. Cotton, in his book entitled the Keys of the Kingdom, uſes very remarkable expreſſions (chap. vi.) reſpecting the power of ſuch courts. "They have power," ſays he, "not "only to give *light* and *counſell* in matter of truth and "practice, but alſo to *command* and *enjoine* the things to "be believed and done. The expreſſe words of the "ſynodicall letter, Acts xv. 27. imply no leſſe. It is "an act of the power of the keyes to binde burdens; "and this binding power ariſeth not only materially "from *the weight* of the matters impoſed, but alſo "formally from *the authority* of the Synod, which being "an ordinance of Chriſt, bindeth the more for the "Synod's ſake." The Weſtminſter Independents alſo, in their debate with the Aſſembly, not only expreſsly allow, p. 115. 137. 138. that "Synods are an *holy or-*"*dinance of God*, and of *great uſe* for the finding out "and declaring of truth in difficult caſes, and for heal-"ing offences," but likewiſe declare, "that *all the* "*churches in a province*, being offended at a particular "congregation, may call that ſingle congregation to "account; yea, *all the churches in a nation*, may call one "or more congregations to an account—that they may "examine and admoniſh, and, in caſe of obſtinacy, "declare them to be ſubverters of the faith—that they "are of uſe to give advice to the *magiſtrate* in matters "of religion," p. 115.—"that they have authority to *de-*"*termine concerning controverſies of faith*—that their deter-"minations are to be received with great honour and "conſcientious reſpect and obligation, as from Chriſt—"that if an offending congregation refuſe to ſubmit to "their determinations, they may withdraw from them, "and deny church-communion and fellowſhip with

" them—and that this ſentence of non-communion may " be ratified and backed with the authority of the civil " magiſtrate, to the end it may be the more effectual," p. 138.* Mr. Thomas Goodwin, moreover, in his Treatiſe on the Government of the Church of Chriſt, p. 202. very pointedly aſſerts, " that as we acknowledge elective " occaſional Synods of the elders of many churches, as " the churches have need to refer caſes of difference to " them: ſo in caſe of mal-adminiſtration, or an unjuſt " proceeding, in the ſentence of excommunication, and " the like, we acknowledge *appeals* or *complaints* may be " made to *other* churches; and the elders of thoſe " churches met in a Synod, who, being offended, may, " as *an ordinance* of Chriſt, *judge* and *declare* that ſentence " to be null, void, and unjuſt; and that not ſimply, as " *any company of men* may ſo judge, giving their judg- " ments of a fact done; but as an ordinance of Chriſt " in ſuch caſes, and for that end, *ſanctified by him* to " *judge* and *declare* in matters of difference." And, again, he adds, " In caſe this church will not own this perſon " thus wrongfully ejected; theſe churches, or any of them, " upon this determination of their elders (the churches " at their return approving the ſentence), may both " receive the party in among themſelves, and ſo relieve " the man; and further alſo profeſs to hold no communion

* Since it is evident from this and other paſſages in the papers of theſe forerunners of our preſent Independents, that they no leſs certainly believed in the propriety of a connection between the church and ſtate than our *Preſbyterian Eſtabliſhment* does, nay, as their ideas on this ſubject were greatly higher than what is profeſſed by it ſince the act of toleration; if the latter be viewed by them, on account of this connection, as worthy of being diſtinguiſhed by the name of Babylon, upon the ſame principle muſt it not be extended to their ancient predeceſſors, and muſt not modern Independents be conſidered at leaſt as the children of thoſe who were members and ſupporters of ſpiritual Babylon.

" with that church, if they perceive that church doth " continue obſtinate, having either for the manner pro- " ceeded therein, againſt the common principles of equity " and right, or againſt, and beſide the principles where- " by churches are to proceed which that church itſelf " hath, and doth hold forth and profeſs." But does not this, whatever was intended by the author, plainly ſanction *an authoritative court of review?* Is it not here declared, that when an improper deciſion is paſſed by the rulers of any particular congregation, the perſons who are aggrieved may *appeal* and *complain* to a meeting of the elders of a number of *diſtinct* and nominally independent congregations—That theſe miniſters, met in this court, may, as *an ordinance of Chriſt*, *declare* that ſentence to be *null and void*, and enjoin that church to review their deed; and—that if the church which has erred perſiſts in its error, theſe miniſters of *ſeparate* and *diſtinct* congregations may paſs a deciſion, declaring that they ſhall henceforth be cut off from their communion, which deciſion, if ratified by the conſent of their churches, ſhall be conſidered as binding? Does this declaration however of what the needs of the church at preſent demand (and the author cannot be ſuppoſed to have been partial to Preſbytery), correſpond with what *you* tell us ſhould be the ſituation of *every congregation*, and what you glory in as the boaſt of every *Independent* ſociety? Was it the opinion of this man, even though an Independent, that " every particular congregation," as you allege, " ſhould have the *ſole* government of its own " affairs, and be amenable to no ſociety of men under " heaven; and that while, in reference to its own mem- " bers, its deciſion was final, it ſhould pretend *to inter-* " *fere with none elſe?*" Or whatever might be the *independency* which he might aſcribe to them *in profeſſion*, does he not ſubject them as really to the *authoritative controul* of this aſſembly of the paſtors of *other* congrega-

tions, if ſupported by their *churches*, as any *Preſbyterian* congregation is to that of a Preſbytery, or a Preſbytery is to that of a Synod or Aſſembly * ? The ſame remark which is here offered upon Goodwin, may be alſo applied to the extract which was made from the papers of the reſt of the Weſtminſter Independents.

That ſimilar ſentiments were profeſſed by the great Dr. Owen is evident from his book on the Nature and Government of the Goſpel-church. " No church there-" fore," ſays he (p. 413.), " is *ſo independent*, as that it " can always, and in all caſes, obſerve the duties it owes " unto the Lord Chriſt and the church catholic, by all " thoſe powers which it is able to act *in itſelf diſtinctly*,

* Is it objected, that the caſe muſt undoubtedly be different, becauſe the congregation which has erred may either obey or reject the deciſion of theſe paſtors, even though ſupported by their churches? It is replied, that if they do ſo, according to Goodwin, even though an Independent, they muſt be cut off from their communion; and in what reſpect does this differ from the authority which is claimed by a Preſbytery, or Synod, as a court of review? This convention of the paſtors of Independent churches, though they profeſs *merely* to deliver *an advice* to the congregation which has erred, and require them ſimply to review their ſentence, tell them at the ſame time, that if they do not pronounce it " null and void," and adopt the deciſion which they point out, no fellowſhip can henceforth be granted to them with their churches. And to ſay that the congregations to which theſe paſtors belong, muſt ratify this determination before it can be valid, does not alter the matter, but only demonſtrates that this power of controul, and authoritative review, over a particular congregation, which Preſbyterians affirm ought to be lodged in a Preſbytery, or Synod, or Aſſembly, ſhould be veſted alſo in the members of theſe different churches as well as their paſtors. The neceſſity of the ſubordination of this church to the review of theſe others is ſtill admitted; and this ſubordination, in oppoſition to you and the reſt of your brethren, one of the wiſeſt and beſt of the ancient Independents affirms to be indiſpenſable for promoting the intereſts of the church of God.

" *without conjunction with others.* And the church that " confines its duty unto the acts of its own assemblies, " *cuts itself off from the external communion of the church* " *catholic; nor will it be safe for any man to commit the* " *conduct of his soul to such a church.* Wherefore," he adds, " this acting in Synods is an *institution of Jesus* " *Christ;* not in an express command, but *in the nature* " *of the thing itself, fortified with apostolical example.* For " having erected such a church-state, and disposed all " his churches into that order and mutual relation unto " one another, as that *none of them can be complete,* or " discharge their whole duty without mutual advice and " counsel; he hath thereby ordained this way of their " communion in Synods, *no other being possible unto that* " *end.* And hereby such conventions are interested in " the promise of his presence, namely, that, where two " or three are gathered together in his name, there he " will be in the midst of them. For these assemblies " being the necessary effect of his own constitution in " the nature and use of his churches, are, or may be, in " his name, and so enjoy his presence."

Besides, he observes (p. 414.), that " the end of all " particular churches is the edification of the church " catholic unto the glory of God in Christ. And it is " evident, that in many instances this cannot be attained, " yea, that *it must be sinfully neglected,* unless this way for " the preservation and carrying of it on be attended " unto. Truth, peace, and love, may be lost among " churches, and so the union of the catholic church in " them be dissolved, unless this means for their preserva- " tion and reparation be made use of. And that parti- " cular church which extends not its duty *beyond its own* " *assemblies and members, is fallen off from the principal end* " *of its institution.* And *every principle, opinion,* or *persua-* " *sion,* that inclines any church to confine its care and " duty unto its own edification only, yea, or of those

" only which agree with it in ſome peculiar practice, " making it neglective of all due means of the edification " of the church catholic, is *ſchiſmatical*.

" There is direction hereunto included in the order " and method of church-proceedings in caſe of offence, " preſcribed unto it by Chriſt himſelf. The beginning " and riſe of it is between two individual perſons; " thence is it carried unto the cognizance and judgment " of two or three others before unconcerned; from them " it is to be brought unto the church; and there is no " doubt but the church hath power to determine con- " cerning it, as unto its own communion, to continue " the offender in it, or reject him from it. This muſt " abide, as unto outward order and the preſervation of " peace. But no church is infallible in their judgment " abſolutely in any caſe; and in many, their determi- " nations may be ſo doubtful as not to affect the con- " ſcience of him who is cenſured. But ſuch a per- " ſon is not only a member of that particular church, " but by virtue thereof, of the catholic church alſo. It " is neceſſary therefore that he ſhould *be heard and judged* " as unto his intereſt therein, if he do deſire it. And " this can *no way be done*, but *by ſuch Synods* as we ſhall " immediately deſcribe.

" Synods" (p. 416.) " are conſecrated unto the uſe " of the church *in all ages*, by the example of the apoſtles, " in their guidance of the firſt churches of Jews and " Gentiles; which hath the force of a *divine inſtitution*, " as being given by them under the infallible conduct " of the Holy Ghoſt, Acts xv. which we ſhall ſpeak " farther unto immediately.

" Upon the whole," he remarks, p. 419. " if it be " reported or known by credible teſtimony, that any " church hath admitted into the exerciſe of divine wor- " ſhip any thing ſuperſtitious or vain, or if the members " of it walk like thoſe deſcribed by the apoſtle, Philip.

" iii. 18, 19. unto the diſhonour of the goſpel, and of " the ways of Chriſt, the church itſelf not endeavouring " its own reformation and repentance; other churches, " walking in communion therewith, by virtue of their " common intereſt in the glory of Chriſt, and honour " of the goſpel, after more private ways for its reduc- " tion, as opportunity and duty may ſuggeſt unto their " elders, ought to aſſemble in a Synod for advice, either " as to the uſe of farther means for the recovery of ſuch " a church, or to *withhold communion* from it in caſe of " obſtinacy in its evil ways. The want of a due at- " tendance unto this part of the communion of churches, " with reſpect unto goſpel-worſhip in its purity, and " goſpel-obedience in its power, was a great means of the " decay and apoſtaſy of them all. By reaſon of this " negligence, inſtead of being helpful one to another, " for their mutual recovery, and the revival *of the things* " *that were ready to die*, they gradually infected one " another, according as they fell into their decays, and " countenanced one another by their examples unto a " continuance in ſuch diſorders." And with reſpect to the extent of theſe Synods, in p. 426. he ſays, " Yet " this I ſhall ſay, that whereas it is eminently uſeful unto " the church catholic, that all the churches profeſſing " the ſame doctrine of faith, within the limits of *the* " *ſame ſupreme civil government*, ſhould hold conſtant " actual communion among themſelves unto the ends of " it before mentioned, I ſee not how it can be *any* " *abridgment of the liberty of particular churches*, or inter- " fere with any of their rights which they hold by " divine inſtitution, if through more conſtant *leſſer* " Synods for advice, there be a communication of their " mutual concerns to thoſe that are *greater*, until, if " occaſion require, and if it be expedient, *there be a* " *General Aſſembly* of them all, to adviſe about any thing " wherein they are all concerned."

Thus while many of the moſt zealous modern Independents reprobate the idea of convening the paſtors of other congregations in a Preſbytery, or Synod, or General Aſſembly, to review, in any caſe of error or injuſtice, a deciſion which has been paſſed in a particular congregation, the opinion which was held by this moſt diſtinguiſhed ancient advocate for Independency was directly oppoſite. Every church which is not connected with ſuch courts of ſuperintendence (and this is the caſe certainly with the Tabernacle-churches), "is cut off," at leaſt in his view, "from the external communion of the "church catholic in a moſt important relation; nor will "it be ſafe," he even affirms, "for any man," however it may be admired and applauded by many, "to commit "his ſoul to ſuch a church." Nay, however ſuch courts may he decried by his modern, but perhaps not more enlightened followers, "no church," according to him, "can be complete without them; and the church which "wants them, is fallen off from *the principal* end of its "inſtitution; and every opinion, principle, or perſua-"ſion, that leads to the neglect of them, is *ſchiſmatical*." And, in ſhort, while ſome of our modern Independents treat with deriſion Preſbyteries and Synods as they obtain among Preſbyterians, and aſk with triumph where we can diſcover ſuch courts in ſcripture, the illuſtrious Owen, whoſe acquaintance with the ſcriptures was moſt probably not leſs profound and extenſive than theirs, expreſsly declares them "*to be an inſtitution of Chriſt*, not in an "expreſs command, but in the nature of the thing itſelf, "*fortified with apoſtolical example*." And, again, that "they are conſecrated unto the uſe of the church in all "ages, by *the example of the apoſtles*, in their guidance of "the firſt churches of the Jews and Gentiles; which "hath the force of a *divine inſtitution*, as being given by "them *under the infallible conduct of the Holy Ghost*." In fine, he allows that there may be not only leſſer Synods,

or meetings, as the word ſignifies, of the paſtors of churches in the ſame communion, but "Synods that "are greater, until, if occaſion require, and if it be ex- "pedient, there be *a General Aſſembly* of them all, to "adviſe about any thing wherein they are all concerned." It is obvious, then, that if our preſent Independents ſneer at Preſbyterians when they affirm that ſuch courts are authorized by ſcripture, they muſt connect with them, in their ſneer, their own not leſs venerable predeceſſors, Owen, and Cotton, and Hooker, and Goodwin, with his ſix moſt reſpectable brethren in the Weſtminſter Aſſembly. And while, in their ſuperior wiſdom, they look down with pity upon Preſbyterians in general when they attempt to prove the authority of ſuch courts from ſcripture, and conſider them as wreſting the ſacred oracles, they ought undoubtedly to look *back* with the ſame regret and compaſſion upon their *own erring forefathers*, who, leſs judicious or candid than their more perfect children, unfortunately believed alſo in Preſbyteries, and Synods, and General Aſſemblies—courts which, though but conſultative, are not more clearly demonſtrable than thoſe of Preſbyterians are from the word of of God.

It may indeed be alleged, that theſe courts of review, for which Dr. Owen contends, ſuperior to the elderſhip of a particular congregation, were warranted only to deliver an advice to that individual church, but could not exerciſe over it any authoritative rule. He affirms however, in common with Goodwin, that if this particular congregation does not comply with the deciſion of a Synod or Aſſembly, all the churches, whoſe repreſentatives ſit in theſe courts, "may withhold communion "from it." Is not this however, by *whatever name* you call it, as much authority over this particular congregation, even by the paſtors and members of other churches, as is ever aſſumed by a Preſbyterian Synod? and is not

this the only difference between them, that the Synods of the latter alone exercise this authoritative power, while the members at large of the various churches represented in the Synods which were argued for by the former, together with the pastors, were to be vested with this power over that particular church? Do not many of the arguments of Dr. Owen moreover, whatever he designed, prove that the ministers of a number of churches, met in a Synod, have as much power over any church in a particular communion, which errs either in doctrine or discipline, as the governors of any particular congregation have over any member of that congregation, who walks unworthily of the Christian character? Nay, as was before remarked, does he not directly say, that "as a Christian is not only a member "of a particular church, but, by virtue thereof, of the "catholic church also, it is necessary (if he has been "aggrieved by any decision of the men who govern the "former) that he should be *heard* and *judged* as to his "interest in the latter, if he do desire it? And does he "not assert, that this can no way be done, but by *such* "*Synods* as have been mentioned?" And, upon the whole, if it be doubted whether these considerations evince that Dr. Owen, while he reprobated an imperious and unreasonable authority, would have granted to Synods, over particular churches, a degree of authority equal to that which is intrusted to them by Presbyterians, let the following very strong and satisfactory testimony from his life be consulted. As the celebrated Whitefield, though by profession an Episcopalian, is reported to have declared, that of all the ecclesiastical constitutions on earth, that of the church of Scotland appeared to him the most excellent; so this great Independent has left an acknowledgment no less honourable to her Presbyterian administration and discipline, which proves that he must have agreed with her in her views of authority, while at

the ſame time he contended, as her rulers alſo do, that none, who could not ſubmit to the deciſions of office-bearers in any particular inſtance, ſhould be forced againſt their will to continue in the church. "I have been the "larger," ſays his biographer, in the acconnt of him which is annexed to his book on Spiritual-mindedneſs, p. 456. "in this extract of the Doctor's opinion about "church-government, becauſe it ſhews (whatever might "have been his ſentiments when younger) how much "he agreed with *all Protestant churches*, that of Eng-"land excepted, in this point, in the latter part of his "days; and that had others been of his mind, the dif-"ference betwixt thoſe called Preſbyterians and Inde-"pendents might eaſily have been reconciled. He was of "ſo healing a temper in this matter, that *I heard him* "*ſay*, before a perſon of quality, and others, *He could* "*readily join with Preſbytery as it was exerciſed in Scot-*"*land**." It may perhaps be alleged however, that

* That ſuch alſo were the ſentiments of the Independents in Holland, the country where, according to the teſtimony of Moſheim (vol. v. p. 406.), about two hundred years ago, congregational churches began to be formed, muſt be evident to any one who attends either to their writings or proceedings. The church at Rotterdam, for inſtance, as we are informed by Hoornbeek, in his Summa Controverſiarum cum Infidelibus, Hæreticis, et Schiſmaticis, p. 778. having unjuſtly depoſed one of their miniſters, the church at Arnheim wrote to them—ſtated the offence which their conduct had given to the reſt of their brethren—requeſted them to ſubject themſelves, with all their proceedings, to the review of a Synod, which was to be called for that purpoſe—and told them, that ſuch a Synod was to be ſummoned. The reaſon which they aſſign for it is, that "no particular church, in any "communion, ought to claim an exemption from giving an ac-"count of its conduct, or *being cenſurable by others*;" ſo repugnant, ſay they, "to our ſentiments is that *independent liberty* which is "commonly objected to us"—a liberty, however, in which the preſent Independents ſo much glory. This Synod having met in the city of Arnheim, and the members from Rotterdam having

though such were the views of many ancient Independents respecting Presbyterian government, it is no argument why they should still be retained by us, if we are not convinced of their utility or truth. It is granted

been summoned before them, the business was investigated for several days, and witnesses were examined and parties heard. A decision at last being given against the church, it publicly and humbly acknowledged its error, received its minister, after he too had confessed some fault which he had committed, and, having appointed a solemn day of fasting, humbled themselves before God and men on account of their sin. The words of Hoornbeek (and Goodwin and Nye, it may be remarked, were members of this Synod) are the following: "Arnhemiensis cœtus scripsit ad "Roterodamensem, significans datum scandalum, ex temeraria "ministri oppressione, et depositione, quare ab iis petit paterentur in nomine Christi, et pro vindicando ejus honore, atque in "solatium oppressi ministri, causæ examen coram reliquis suæ "nationis ecclesiis, vel quibuscunque aliis hoc ipsorum facto offensis, institui; utque se subjicerent (ita loquuntur, to subject themselves) *integræ totius negotii actorumque omnium revisioni atque examini.* Quod ubi concessissent prompto lubentique animo, et "adveniissent Arnhemo ii, quos supra diximus, institutusque conventus fuisset, præmissa adhortatione, quæ eo spectabat ut "docerent, singularem aliquam et particularem ecclesiam, quæ "sibi datam existimat a Christo judicandi eos qui ejusdem secum "corporis ac societatis potestatem, non debere sibi *arrogare exemptionem a reddenda ratione, vel a censura aliorum (an exemption from "giving account, or being censurable by any other)*, sive *magistratus* "supra, sive proximarum ecclesiarum juxta se. Tam longe "(dicunt) a mente nostra aberat *independens illa libertas*, quæ "nobis vulgo impingitur; etiam tum quando minima nobis a "regno Anglicano dependentia, vel revertendi eo spes videbatur. "Hic autem successus atque exitus Synodi illius fuit, ut, habita "aliquot dierum causæ cognitione, auditisque et examinatis variis "testibus, quomodo in curia aliqua ubi vel maxime auctoritate res "agitur, desiderari posset, cœtus qui offenderat, palam errorem "suum agnoverit, et ministrum, confessum etiam in quo forte ipse "peccaverat, restituerit in pristinum suum locum, indictoque "solemni jejunio, se coram Deo ac hominibus propter peccatum "illud suum humiliarit." How different indeed from the opinion

indeed, that our preſent Independents are certainly not bound, by the example of their forefathers, to admit any principle, or perform any duty towards God or man, however important, againſt their convictions. Such teſtimonies however in favour of Preſbytery, from many of the greateſt and moſt enlightened men that ever adorned their cauſe, ought to lead them at leaſt to review their more levelling and democratic principles * with diffidence and caution, and ought undoubtedly to teach them greater moderation and liberality than ſome of them have diſcovered in their language reſpecting the nature and tendency of a ſyſtem, which many of their moſt diſtinguiſhed ancient ornaments either *practically admitted*, or publicly commended.

LETTER XIII.

SIR,

THAT it may not be imagined that this principle of Preſbytery has no foundation but the authority of reſpectable names, I ſhall now endeavour to prove that it is eſtabliſhed by the united evidence of reaſon and ſcripture.

The following quotations from Baillie and Ferguſon, two ancient Preſbyterians, contain, if I am not miſtaken, a clear and accurate ſtatement of the oppoſite views which have been taken of this queſtion.

" Independents and Browniſts," ſays Baillie, in his Diſ-

of theſe original Independents are the tenets of thoſe who now aſſume their name, moſt of whom are almoſt as much diſſimilar to *them* as to *Preſbyterians*, and many of whom, in their predilection for illiterate miniſters, and virulence againſt churches of other denominations, reſemble rather the Boltonians or Browniſts, than thoſe who were diſtinguiſhed by the name of *Independents!*

* I ſpeak of their religious ſentiments only.

ſuaſive from the Errors of the Times, "maintain that every "particular church, every ſingle congregation, is inde- "pendent from any Preſbytery, any Synod, any As- "ſembly: This we deny, affirming the true dependence "and ſubordination of parochial congregations to Preſ- "byteries, and of theſe to Synods; to which we aſcribe "power, authority, and juriſdiction:" p. 197. "Inde- "pendency is the full liberty of ſuch a church (a par- "ticular congregation) to diſcharge all the parts of "religion, doctrine, ſacraments, *diſcipline*, and all within "itſelf, without all dependence, *all ſubordination* to any "other on earth, more or fewer, ſo that the ſmalleſt "congregation, ſuppoſe of *three* perſons*, though it "fall into the *groſſeſt hereſies*, may not be controuled by "any orthodox Synod, were it œcumenic (or univerſal) "of all the churches in the world:" p. 198.

"We come now," ſays the other writer, p. 150. of his Brief Refutation of the Errors of Independency, Separation, &c. "to the *ſecond head*, and it is that for which "mainly they are called *Independents:* The point they "affirm is this, that every particular church-ſeſſion, or "congregational elderſhip (or, according to others, con- "gregation), is furniſhed with the *higheſt* power of "church-government on earth, ſo that there is no power "in the church above them to call them to an account, "when they go wrong, to reſcind any act once con- "cluded, though it were never ſo unjuſt. They grant, "that a Synod of miniſters and elders may meet to con- "ſult about matters†, but withal affirm, that they have

* There are ſome of them in Glaſgow which conſiſt only of *eight* perſons.

† You object to the propriety of theſe aſſociations of miniſters being conſidered as the repreſentatives of the churches to which they belong, and propoſe that they ſhould meet only in their private characters, as an aſſembly of individuals, and not in their public official capacity.

" no ecclesiastical power to command in the Lord any " congregation whatsoever: So that if a man be wrong- " ed by a Session (or congregation); as for instance, if " he be unjustly censured (as it may very readily fall " out), he must sit with his wrong, *there is no power to* " *right it till Christ come in the clouds:* Or if a particular " congregation divide, turn heretics, run wrong (as " many of the *Independent* congregations do), there is " no church-power to heal the breach, unless it be by " giving an advice, which they may either follow, or " not follow, as likes them best. We again grant, " that particular elderships have a power from Jesus " Christ to exercise discipline in these things which con- " cern *the congregation in particular.* But as for other " things of more public concernment, that is to say, " things that concern other congregations as well as " them, these ought to be handled by a superior judi- " catory; and that even in those things of *particular* " *concernment*, they are liable to appeals, and the in- " spection of the superior judicatory; so that wherein " they shall be found wrong, partial, or erroneous, they " may be called to an account.

" We allow unto particular congregations an elder- " ship and power of discipline within themselves, to " judge of these things that are of their *particular con-* " *cernment:* But as for things wherein other congrega- " tions are concerned with them, we hold that such do " belong to *superior judicatories*, according to the rule, " *What belongs unto all, should be handled by all.* Second- " ly, we do not give power to *any one single congregation* " *above another:* We say, that *all congregations (the least* " as well as *the greatest)* are *equal* in power. We do " only say, that all *particular* congregations should be " subject to a Presbytery, made up of elders taken from " among themselves, wherein no congregation can chal-

" lenge power more than another: the meaneſt hath as " great power in them as the greateſt."

When it is affirmed by Preſbyterians, that every particular congregation ought not to be independent of a Preſbytery or Synod, it is not intended that its rulers, or office-bearers, are to be dependent upon them for the exerciſe of their power after they are inveſted with it, or that they may be deprived of it by them at pleaſure, in that ſociety which they govern. All that is deſigned is ſimply that they are ſubject, in any caſe of error, or any inſtance of mal-adminiſtration, to the authoritative review of the miniſters and elders of a number of congregations met as a Preſbytery; and, perhaps, it would be better, as the judicious Hoornbeek has obſerved, to expreſs their relation to ſuch a court by the terms *ſubjection* or *ſubordination*, than by the word *dependence*, which is occaſionally uſed by ſome ancient Preſbyterians *.

* The words of this very excellent and candid writer, in his book againſt ſchiſmatics, p. 771. deſerve to be quoted. " Quid- " nam vero hic tanti, iterum quæro, quod magnarum contentionum, " et tumultuum cauſa eſſe debeat? quodque non vel tolerari vel " componi, ſi non corrigi facile poſſit? Eccleſiam particularem " habere omnem poteſtatem eccleſiaſticam *in ſe*, neque *eam accipere* " *a Synodo*, vel *ab aliis ſuperioribus*, certum eſt. Pone (verbi cauſa) " ut modo una particularis ſit eccleſia, vel in mundo, vel in aliqua " parte mundi, vel ut non ſint eccleſiæ, quæ ſociari in unum poſ- " ſint; aut quod aliqua cum iis ſociari nequeat: non hæc eo " minus eccleſia eſt, vel mutila ideo aliqua ſui parte, nedum " eſſentiali. Jam ſociari in unum eccleſias, et convenire in Sy- " nodos, haud improbant adverſarii, tantum non deponere a Sy- " nodis. Et ſi bene introſpiciamus, *dependentia* a Synodis non " congrue dicitur. Quippe haud exiſtimandum, vel ab aliis ſupe- " rioribus, aut eccleſiis, aut Synodis, habere precariam poteſtatem " particularem quamque eccleſiam, vel ſe poteſtate ſua exuere, " quando in Synodo coit, illamque ei tradere. Neutiquam. " Synodorum vel uſus vel poteſtas nihil officere poteſt aut debet " eccleſiarum particularium libertati et poteſtati, eſtque non *pri-* " *vativa*, ſed *cumulativa* poteſtas, eccleſiaque particularis quæli-

The queſtion then is, Whether every congregation, with its office-bearers, ſhould be ſo independent as to be completely ſeparate from every other in point of go-

" bet manet ſubjectum proprium et adæquatum *plenæ poteſtatis* " *eccleſiaſticæ*. Neque Synodi in alias ſub ea comprehenſas eccleſias " poteſtatem uſurpent imperantem, quæ dominorum et ſuperio- " rum eſt in inferiores ſibi ſubditos; ſed ex communi et libero " eccleſiarum conſenſu in Synodum, hæc poteſtatem habet dele- " gatam, et auxiliarem vel miniſtrantem, eccleſiis *voluntaria con-* " *ſenſione*, ob neceſſitatem ordinis et ædificationis, Synodis ſe ſub- " jicientibus. Uti quando in rebuſpublicis, vel alibi, ex communi " æqualium conſilio collegium erigitur, ad quod communes cauſæ " devolvuntur tractandæ et definiendæ, quod in illas nullam habet " poteſtatem, niſi earum arbitrio et mutuo conſenſu. Quod in " circulis vel diœceſibus eccleſiarum, quare hac iſti, illæ alteri Sy- " nodo ſe adjungant, et ſubmittant, apparet. Non eſt ergo pro- " prie hæc eccleſiarum ad Synodum relatio, *dependentia* dicenda, " neque commode mihi vocabulo *Independentiſmi* vel denotata " controverſia, vel hominum fecta videtur: nam bene dici poteſt, " eccleſiam particularem eſſe independentem ab alia, vel a Synodis, " aut hominibus; pendere autem a ſolo Chriſto: *ſubmiſſio* potius " appellanda fuerat, ut quæ venit ex communi conſenſu eccleſia- " rum, ſe illi ordini, ad ædificationem et bene eſſe eccleſiæ, ſub- " jicientium. A qua nomenclatura ipſos non admodum alienos " futuros, et molliore verbo rem non malam facilius perſuaſum " ipſis iri confidimus, quum in apologia dicentes audiverimus, ſuis " ſe ſenioribus *ſubjectionem* præſtare, et Synodi Roterodamenſis ſen- " tentiæ ſubjectionem a Roterodamenſi cœtu poſtulatam, teneri " eccleſiam ſubmittere aliorum judicio et cenſuræ, *&c.* quæ faci- " lius mihi videntur concilianda cum ſententia noſtra, quam cum " nomine dependentiæ (quo offunduntur) vel poteſtatis uſurpatæ " a Synodo in eccleſias. Verum quid eſt quod adeo offendere " eos poſſit, ſi Synodorum poteſtate ita explicata, et limitata, " aliquam iis tribuamus? Cenſuram ſtringere incontumacem, " pronunciare *non-communionem*, quid vel ab excommunicatione " adeo diſtat, vel ab uſurpata poteſtate? illa non-communio paſ- " ſive conſiderata, quid differt ab excommunicatione? qui extra " ſanctorum communionem ponitur, annon idem eſt quod excom- " municatus? vel eccleſia ſic damnata non-communione, annon " poteſtatem aliquam ſentit adverſus ſe exercitam? Certe magis " videntur *verba* horrere, quam *rem*."

vernment? Or, while in ordinary matters it is governed by its elders, are they reſponſible for their conduct, in any caſe of error, to the miniſters and elders of a number of congregations with whom they are aſſociated in the ſame general body and religious fellowſhip? and are theſe again accountable to a ſtill greater aſſembly, compoſed of the repreſentatives of a greater number of churches, till at laſt they arrive at a univerſal meeting or council of the repreſentatives of all the churches in the ſame religious connection, the higheſt court in the community?

That every congregation ought not thus to be ſeparated, as is the caſe univerſally with Independent churches, appears to be manifeſt from the following arguments.

In the 1ſt place, The viſible profeſſing church, while comprehending many particular and diſtinct congregations, is repreſented in ſcripture as conſtituting one great and beautiful whole, one regular and cloſely connected ſociety. It is compared, for inſtance, in Rom. xi. to an *olive-tree*, for while ſome of the Jews, the ancient church of God, are ſaid to have been cut off from it on account of their unbelief, the Gentiles, who are compared to a wild olive, are repreſented as graffed in among the branches which remained, and as admitted with them to partake of the juice and fatneſs of the olive-tree. It is often alſo exhibited under the emblem of a *body*, particularly in the twelfth chapter of Firſt Corinthians. It is frequently diſtinguiſhed alſo by the name of a kingdom, as will be evident to any one who examines the thirteenth chapter of Matthew. Nor is it merely, as Mr. Glaſs wiſhes to inſinuate, the *inviſible* church which is thus deſcribed. Of this church it is plain that there is a part in heaven; but the church here referred to, is one in which a variety of offices are inſtituted for its ſpiritual edification, and for converting ſinners to obedience to the truth (1 Cor. xii. Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13.), a circumſtance undoubtedly which will not apply to the former.

Beſides, that it cannot merely be true believers, the myſtical body of Jeſus, who are there intended, as is aſſerted by that writer, ſeems evident from this, that, in the firſt of theſe paſſages, ſome of its members are ſaid "to have been *cut off* from it on account of their unbe-"lief," which cannot be alleged of true believers, unleſs the doctrine of the perſeverance of the ſaints be rejected. In the ſecond of theſe quotations, the apoſtle repreſents the church of which he ſpeaks, as a church which, and which alone, had been enriched with ſupernatural gifts, as prophecy, miracles, the gift of tongues, *&c.* We know however, that theſe gifts were beſtowed in the primitive times upon many who were not members of the inviſible church or real believers, for we are told in Matth. vii. 22, 23. that in the day of judgment many will ſay unto Chriſt, "Lord, Lord, have we not "propheſied in thy name? and in thy name have caſt "out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful "works? and yet that he will profeſs unto them, "I never knew you: depart from me ye that work ini-"quity." And, in the third of theſe paſſages, it appears to be be no leſs undeniable, that it cannot be the regenerated and inviſible church which is compared to a kingdom, for that kingdom is ſaid there to reſemble a field, in which there were tares as well as wheat, and in which theſe tares were to remain till the univerſal harveſt, at the conſummation of all things. In ſhort, though the higheſt ſpiritual characters be occaſionally applied to this univerſal church, it will not prove that it is only the inviſible church, conſiſting ſolely of believers, and not the viſible church, of profeſſing Chriſtians, which is deſigned. It is the cuſtom of the different apoſtles of Chriſt to deſcribe men by what they profeſs to be, if there be nothing in their conduct which contradicts that profeſſion, rather than from what they really are in the ſight of God. Paul, we know, addreſſes *the whole* of the

members of the churches of Rome, and Corinth, and Ephesus, and Thessalonica, as holy, and yet we have reason to suspect, that, if in the little company of our Saviour there was one traitor, all of them had not experienced regenerating grace. And Jesus himself, when addressing his disciples, and announcing to them promises of celestial glory, proceeds upon the same principle, and treats all of them, agreeably to their profession, as *genuine saints*, though he knew that one of them was a son of perdition. "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed "thee," said Peter to him (Matth. xix. 27, 28.): "And "Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye "which have followed me in the regeneration, when the "Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also "shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes "of Israel." Not only so, but strong expressions are employed (1 Cor. xii.) to point out the unity of this church, and the duties which result from it to the members at large. Nay, we are directly informed in the 25th verse, that God hath appointed all of them throughout the world, the lowest as well as the most eminent, to be united in one body for this particular end, that "there "should be *no schism in the body*, but that all the mem-"bers of this universal church should have the same care "one for another." But in what manner is it possible that these representations can be verified upon the Independent plan? Were all the congregations in the world composed of none but such as appeared to be saints, and yet were each of these disconnected from the rest in point of government, how could these descriptions be fulfilled? Would not every branch in this olive-tree be separated from every other? Would not every inferior community in this kingdom be cut off from the rest? and would not there be as many supreme independent principalities, each of them uncontroulable by any higher subordinate power upon earth, as there were individual societies?

Would not every member of this body be torn from the others? and, inſtead of there being no ſchiſm in the body, would it not, according to the very conſtitution of the church, be broken down into ten thouſand incoherent fractions, all of which combined cannot take as much care of any particular ſociety, to prevent them from erring, or exerciſe as much authority over them, if they perſiſt in error, as is exerciſed by that ſociety over any individual of its members? Since then it ſeems manifeſt, that the univerſal profeſſing church of Chriſt is repreſented in ſcripture as a beautiful whole, as intimately connected as a body, or a kingdom, and in which all the congregations are required to take care of one another, that no ſchiſm may take place in it; and as this would be impracticable upon the Independent plan, if each of them was completely ſeparated from the reſt, and could not exerciſe over it the leaſt authority; this plan muſt be conſidered as untenable, becauſe ſubverſive of the beautiful viſible unity and order of the church.

Is it ſaid, that all the Chriſtian churches throughout the world may be viewed as united, becauſe they have one faith, one hope, one ſpiritual baptiſm, one God and Father of all, and one bread and cup, of which they all participate? This will indeed demonſtrate, that all true believers are *one myſtical body*, but it is not about this union that we are now inquiring. It has been attempted to be proved, that were all the viſible profeſſing congregations on earth to adhere to the doctrine and diſcipline of Chriſt, they would conſtitute what is denominated in the language of ſcripture, one olive-tree, one kingdom, and one body, all the members of which are inveſted with power to prevent any ſchiſm in it. Unleſs then all theſe churches could be conceived to be connected as far as it is poſſible in point of *government*, ſo that a congregation ſhould be ſubject to the controul of the repreſentatives of a number of congregations, the repre-

ſentations of ſcripture muſt be nugatory and unmeaning. Without this, no union of Chriſtian churches could be witneſſed; and though all the congregations on earth ſhould be agreed in their views of doctrine and worſhip, if, as the Independent ſyſtem ſuppoſes, they conſtituted innumerable detached ſocieties, it ſeems impoſſible to conceive how, in any view, they could be denominated *one* viſible church.

It is true, that this one univerſal church has never yet exiſted, but it does not follow that the plan which tends to form it, is either uſeleſs or improper. The nonexiſtence of this church ariſes from the corruptions and prejudices of men; but ſuppoſing it to exiſt, the ſyſtem of Independency would entirely deſtroy its unity and conſiſtence. Beſides, as far as the truth is diſſeminated and embraced, it appears required by the authority or at leaſt by the repreſentations of ſcripture, that all who are united in religious principle ſhould connect themſelves under the ſame government, and form one great and general church. It is not enough to aſſert, as Glaſs has done, that all congregations are no more bound to be ſubject to one great and general government, than to meet in one great aſſembly to partake of the Lords ſupper. The latter, from the nature of things, is impoſſible, but experience has demonſtrated the poſſibility of the former. Though all the congregations in Holland, France, Switzerland, or Scotland, could not aſſemble in one place to eat the ſupper, we know that the churches, in each of theſe countries, have been adminiſtered by a common government, while theſe congregations individually have alſo been governed by their particular rulers. In like manner, though the whole nation of Iſrael could not meet together to eat the paſſover, they were governed by a common council of ſeventy elders, while, in their particular diſtricts, they were alſo ſubject to inferior rulers.

It is difficult to ſay what might, or might not, be practicable, if the church were abſolutely univerſal. As all the nations in the world conſtitute one great political government to which every individual nation is ſubject, it is by no means impoſſible but there might be a general eccleſiaſtical government, compoſed of the repreſentatives of the churches in every country, to which each of theſe churches ſhould be ſubject. Such a general political government does not indeed *oſtenſibly* exiſt, but it is always underſtood to exiſt virtually, and has ever been conſidered as the ſafeguard of thoſe general rights and laws which are called the rights and laws of nature and nations. When the energies of this government are at any time exerted, it may be ſaid to aſſume a *viſible* form: and it is this which conſtitutes and preſerves the balance of power among nations. Why then might not a ſimilar government exiſt in religion if the church were to become univerſal, to which the collected church in every particular country ſhould be ſubordinate.

Nor does it follow, becauſe it is difficult to conceive how ſuch a government could exiſt even though there were a univerſal church, that, while it is not univerſal, the different congregations in a particular country, who are united in religious ſentiment, ought not to be ſubject to one general government. Though all the nations, notwithſtanding their ſubjection to a general virtual government, are not ſubject to it in a *permanent oſtenſible form*, would any one conclude from this, as Independents do reſpecting the church, that each nation ſhould not poſſeſs within itſelf a certain fixed and general political government, or that there ſhould be no rulers in any country ſuperior to the magiſtrates of a particular town or burgh; that every ſuch town ſhould be a diſtinct and totally independent government; and that every individual, connected with this town, ſhould be a virtual as well as a titular governor? What ought we to do then, but reject the

Independent plan, which is so plainly subversive of the unity of the church, and conclude in general, that while every congregation should be governed by its distinct and separate rulers, there should be superior courts, to which all the congregations in the same connection are bound to be subject.

It may be said, indeed, that in political governments men are associated merely for the purpose of defence against foreign enemies. This, however, is but one end of their union; for the civil rights and privileges of every individual in the nation are also to be protected from being invaded. To accomplish this, they learn from experience that it would be dangerous in the extreme to commit to the rulers of every town or village a supreme and final juridical power, without the possibility of appeal to a higher court; and that consequently a gradation of courts is most expedient and necessary.

Still it will be affirmed, that though this arrangement is proper in political matters, it is not necessary or proper in the church of Christ, which is expressly declared to be a kingdom not of this world. It does not however follow from this particular expression, that there ought to be a total difference, *in every instance*, between the spiritual and the political kingdom. If it did, then, because order and government exist in politics, they ought not to exist in religion, but anarchy and disorder be allowed to prevail, a conclusion which few Independents would be disposed to adopt. If then the kingdom of Christ, as it exists in the visible general church, does not necessarily differ, in every point, from political kingdoms, the question naturally occurs, Are *these* some of the instances in which this similarity may take place; that every member is not to be admitted to judge and vote on every proposal of the rulers in a particular church, as every man in a city is not permitted to judge and vote on every measure of the magistrate; and that it would be

improper for every congregation to poſſeſs an independent eccleſiaſtical government, accountable to no higher court, as it would be improper and dangerous that every town ſhould have a political government independent of any ſuperior?

In determining this queſtion, it ſeems fair and reaſonable to appeal not only to ſcripture but to experience. If then, on the authority of experience, it appears that men in every age have been ſo *unqualified* to decide on political queſtions, that it has been accounted at once dangerous and prepoſterous to ſubmit every meaſure of the governors of a city to the deciſion of the citizens before it is adopted, it ſeems equally juſt to maintain that in a congregation, where the ſubjects of diſcuſſion are unqueſtionably more intereſting, and where the members at large are perhaps as really unqualified to decide, it muſt be no leſs prepoſterous to ſubject every meaſure of government to the review of the people before it be put in execution. And if it has alſo been accounted prejudicial to the civil intereſts of men, to conſtitute every town in a kingdom an independent principality, uncontroulable by any higher juridical court, may we not legitimately infer that a ſimilar independency, given to a particular congregation, would be equally prejudicial to the religious intereſts of men? Unleſs then it can be proved, that Chriſtians at large are better fitted to be eccleſiaſtical governors than civil judges; or that a particular congregation is leſs liable to err than the governor or magiſtrates of a city; or that, though they may err as frequently, the conſequences of their improper deciſions, with regard to *religion*, are of leſs importance than thoſe which ariſe from political errors; the reaſoning ſeems fair and the concluſion unavoidable, even though we grant the favourite poſition of Independents, that the church, or kingdom of Chriſt, is not of this world.

I know it has been affirmed by Glafs, that when the profeffing church of Chrift is repreſented in ſcripture as *one*, a particular congregation only is intended, and that the unity even of the church univerſal may be aſcribed to this congregation, becauſe it is an image of the whole catholic church. In proof of this he tells us, that "the apoſtle Paul, in ſome paſſages, accommodates his "doctrine of the unity of the holy catholic church, the "myſtical body of Chriſt, unto a viſible church, a con-"gregation of ſaints, wherein that catholic body is ſhewed "forth; and exhorts the members, in their ſeveral ſtations, "to walk according to it, and ſhew it forth: Eph. ii. 22. "Rom. xii. 6.—10. Eph. iv. 1, 2, 3. 1 Cor. xii. 27.*" In ſome even of theſe paſſages, however, it ſeems plain that it is the *univerſal viſible* church, and not merely a particular congregation, to which unity is attributed. Thus, in Rom. xii. 6. *&c.* the apoſtle not only ſpeaks in general terms of the offices in the church, but includes himſelf, though he had never yet been at Rome, and was not a member of the particular church there. Beſides, even Glafs allows, that, in ver. 4, 5. he ſpeaks of the univerſal church; conſequently, ſince it is his deſign, ver. 3. to inculcate the exerciſe of humility on all Chriſtians, and eſpecially the office-bearers of the church (and to enforce it, he introduces a ſtriking and beautiful alluſion to the relation in which all believers ſtand to each other as members of the general or univerſal church), is it not evident that his inference, in ver. 6. relates to the univerſal church alone, which he there repreſents as one. That it was this church alone which he intended in 1 Cor. xii. is proved from what is ſtated in the 28th verſe. It was certainly not merely in a ſingle congregation at Corinth, but in the univerſal profeſſing viſible church, that "God had ſet ſome, firſt, apoſtles; ſecon-

* Glafs's Works, vol. i. p. 279.

" darily, prophets; thirdly, teachers," &c. That it is the ſame univerſal church, of the unity of which he ſpeaks, Eph. iv. 1, 2, 3. is no leſs clear from the following context. In ſhort, allowing that, in *ſome occaſional* paſſages, particular churches, as that of Epheſus (Eph. ii. 22.), are repreſented to us as conſtituting *one* church, it will not prove that, in *other* paſſages, the univerſal profeſſing church is not as expreſsly pointed out as conſtituting alſo *one* church. That it is ſo deſcribed we have already attempted in ſome meaſure to demonſtrate, and, were it neceſſary, it might be eſtabliſhed from other paſſages alſo. At preſent we ſhall only farther remark, that in this light it ſeems to be very pointedly exhibited in the account of the millennial church: Rev. xxi. This church certainly cannot mean the inviſible church, for we are informed, ver. 24. that the kings of the earth ſhall bring their glory and honour into it; and in ver. 26. that they ſhould bring into it alſo the glory and honour of the nations. And that it cannot ſignify a ſingle congregation is no leſs plain, for nations are repreſented, ver. 24. as walking in the light of it, and kings of different countries as members of it, which certainly will not apply to any ſingle congregation. It can only then be the univerſal viſible church; yet it is deſcribed as conſtituting one great and beautiful whole, for it is pointed out to us under the emblem of a city, and a perſon. It is evident then, that even allowing that unity is ſometimes aſcribed to a particular congregation in the ſacred volume, it is no leſs certainly attributed to the univerſal church. And if the unity of a particular congregation would be deſtroyed by completely ſeparating the members from each other, and rendering them independent of the authority of the whole, the unity of the univerſal church muſt be no leſs deſtroyed by ſeparating every particular congregation which compoſes this church, and making

it independent of the controul of the reſt, in any caſe of error, in point of government.

To conclude, is it objected, that though unity belongs to the univerſal church as well as to a particular congregation, yet it is the latter which is always meant when unity is aſcribed to the viſible profeſſing church; and that this may well be affirmed even of a particular congregation, becauſe it is an image of the univerſal church of Chriſt, ſo that, upon perceiving it, we perceive a repreſentation of this whole catholic ſociety? It is replied, that ſince every individual ſaint, or believer, is repreſented in ſcripture as made at laſt, by the grace of God, a perfect man, and is an image of the whole myſtical body of Chriſt, upon the ſame principle it might be affirmed, that when Chriſt's myſtical body alſo is denominated by Paul (Eph. iv. 13.) a perfect man, it is only a *ſingle Chriſtian* which is there intended by him. And ſince every particular believer, when ſanctified by the grace of God, becomes to him a ſpiritual temple, and is a delightful image of the whole univerſal church, which is diſtinguiſhed alſo by that name, upon the ſame principle it might be argued, that when the univerſal church, as in Eph. ii. 21. is repreſented as a temple, it is only an *individual Chriſtian* which is deſigned by the apoſtle. But if Independents themſelves would conſider it as unfair, were we to maintain that when the univerſal myſtical church is deſcribed in ſcripture as a perfect man, and a ſpiritual temple, individual believers alone are intended, becauſe they are images of the former, and are called alſo by theſe names, muſt it not be equally unfair and unreaſonable in them, to aſſert that though the univerſal viſible church is pointed out in ſcripture as conſtituting one regular and connected whole, it is only a particular congregation which is deſigned, becauſe unity alſo is ſometimes attributed to ſuch congregations, and becauſe,

when we behold the latter, we contemplate an image and emblem of the former?

How, moreover, even upon the principle of this objection, can a particular congregation be a repreſentation of the univerſal viſible church, if that church is not united under one common government? The ſociety which is the image of the other in miniature is unqueſtionably connected under ſuch a government, and by this alone is conſtituted a church. But how can it be a public and viſible emblem of this greater ſociety, if the conſtituent parts of the latter are not united under ſuch an adminiſtration, and have not even the connection which ſubſiſts among the different members of ſuch a congregation?

LETTER XIV.

SIR,

HAVING, in the preceding Letter, endeavoured to eſtabliſh from the repreſentations of ſcripture, that ſuch a unity ought to exiſt among Chriſtian congregations as is inconſiſtent with the plan of Independent churches, I ſhall now confirm this poſition by ſhewing,

2dly, That if every congregation is made ſo independent of every other, that corruptions and improprieties may be admitted in them without being accountable to any ſuperior court on earth, much greater opportunity muſt exiſt for the introduction of error, and tyranny, than on the Preſbyterian ſyſtem.

That the errors or corruptions of a congregation are much more prejudicial to the intereſts of religion in the world than thoſe of individuals does not admit of diſpute. In proportion therefore to their magnitude and tendency ought to be the ſtrength and efficacy of the means of preventing or ſuppreſſing them. On the Inde-

pendent plan however, if a congregation depart from purity of faith or worſhip, the ſame means cannot be applied to reclaim it, as can be employed by its rulers to reclaim or puniſh the corruptions of its individual members. In the latter caſe, they can be admoniſhed, rebuked, and, if they perſiſt in their errors, excommunicated by the rulers. But no ſuch power can be exerciſed over a whole congregation, nor any ſuch puniſhment inflicted on it, notwithſtanding the greater enormity and more baneful tendency of its errors. Nay, even though a number of congregations ſhould be ſeduced or miſled by their example, the contagion muſt remain uncontrouled by either cenſure or puniſhment: and thus our Lord, who has appointed the exerciſe of diſcipline towards offending individuals, has allowed congregations to become corrupt without the poſſibility of recovering them.

In Preſbytery, on the contrary, a congregation is as much under the diſcipline of its ſuperior court as the members are under that of its particular rulers: and even though all the congregations under the review of a Preſbytery ſhould err, they may be puniſhed by a Synod; which, on falling into ſimilar errors with the inferior judicatories, may be puniſhed by the ſupreme court. While Independency therefore provides for the puniſhment of the leaſt faults, or thoſe of members, it overlooks the moſt pernicious and more important faults, the hereſies and corruptions which may take place in *congregations*: by conſequence, as inattention to *the greateſt crimes* is one of the moſt radical and important defects in any government, the principles of Independency muſt be prejudicial to the general intereſts of religion.

Do you ſay, that congregations may admoniſh one another when they fall into error, and endeavour to reclaim them? You allow however, that unleſs there be a power of puniſhing as well as of admoniſhing an offending mem-

ber, the evils which he may introduce can neither be prevented nor removed. On what principle, then, can you refuse a similar power to be necessary for the prevention or suppression of offences committed by a whole congregation? In reply to this it is not sufficient to say with Glass, that though a congregation is not subject to the ecclesiastical censures of any external court, spiritual judgments may be inflicted on it by God; for these may descend on the individual members of a congregation also, yet the authority of discipline is considered as essential to the government of every congregation. Or is it said, that a corrupt congregation, though not subject to the judgment of men, will finally be judged at the tribunal of Christ. The same answer is satisfactory—that the same is the accountableness, and the same will be the judgment, of every individual who persists in his sin. Yet even Independents admit the necessity of discipline in the case of individuals: Can *less* then, it is still demanded, be necessary to prevent error and corruption in a whole congregation than in the case of an individual? Undoubtedly not! Independency, therefore, must be more favourable to the introduction of evils than Presbytery is, which, to every check which Independency possesses, adds the accountableness of every congregation to its superior court, and the review of all decisions, in inferior judicatories, by a still higher and supreme council.

In opposition to this you however remark, p. 53. "So far do we conceive Presbyterian government from "being an arrangement conducive to general utility, "that it appears quite the reverse. It tends to propa- "gate corruption, and to prevent reform. Suppose a "church, on the Presbyterian model, at first compara- "tively pure (as it is generally supposed, perhaps in "some cases justly, that churches in their early days "are), but by degrees corruption creeps into it. As "soon as that corruption infects the majority, from the

" power which Preſbytery gives them over the reſt, they " can force their purer brethren, however reluctantly, " to aſſimilate themſelves to their corrupt ſtandard. If, " for example, in a Preſbytery, one congregation after " another begins to loſe ſight of Chriſtian diſcipline; " whenever the greater part of that Preſbytery does ſo, " the reſt, however much diſpoſed, can no longer main- " tain it. If an individual, in one of theſe purer congre- " gations, feel himſelf aggrieved, an appeal to the ma- " jority ſecures him redreſs. The ſyſtem then tends to " drag down thoſe who would act on Chriſtian principles " to a conformity to ſuch as have departed from them. " Again, it equally tends to prevent reform. If, amidſt " general corruption, a ſpirit of reform ſhould appear in " a ſingle congregation, the authority of the reſt is a " bar in its way. This is, we believe, in ſome caſes " ſeverely felt. Suppoſe a miniſter in the eſtabliſhed " church (and in ſome inſtances, we truſt, it is not " merely matter of ſuppoſition), in the progreſs of his " inquiries reſpecting Chriſtian diſcipline, is convinced " that it is very partially, if at all maintained in his " congregation, admitting even that a majority of his " people held the ſame ſentiments; is it not obvious, " that unleſs the Preſbytery in general were of a ſimilar " opinion, any attempt at reform in that congregation " would prove nugatory and vain. The ſame incon- " venience does not attend Independent churches. We " are far from inſinuating that any form of church- " government preſents an effectual bar to that corruption " to which all inſtitutions, conducted by depraved and " fallible men, are liable; but admitting among Inde- " pendent churches the moſt general departure from " Chriſtian principles to prevail, if, in the midſt of this, " an individual congregation is led to ſtudy greater " purity, the ſyſtem at leaſt preſents no external obſtacle " to counteract it."

On this objection, so formidable in your apprehension, I observe in general, that while you point out as clearly as possible what you imagine to be the tendency of the Presbyterian system to propagate corruption and prevent reform, you forget to shew that Independency is free from a similar tendency. Even on the principles of the reasoning which you adopt, it appears to be much more liable to this objection than Presbytery. Suppose, for instance, a congregation, in either of these connections, just beginning to swerve from purity of faith and worship, and consider the tendency of each of these systems to prevent or reform them. Independency has not a single court which can call it to account, censure or punish it: Presbytery has superior courts, to whose tribunal it is amenable, and which can censure or punish it with as much power as an Independent congregation can any of its offending members. Nay, suppose this congregation to extend its corruption to ten or twenty churches around it, the same want of authority and power to check the progress of this corruption exists. But in Presbytery, though twenty congregations should be tainted with error, there are higher courts, which can endeavour to reform them, not only by admonition and persuasion, but by superadding the same ecclesiastical censures which Independents inflict on the individuals in a particular congregation who persist in error. In a word, in a country where there were 1600 Independent churches, though almost the one half of them should fall into error, and obstinately persist in it, for any power that the remaining majority possess, they must continue unpunished; corruption must be allowed to extend without controul: they must be left to themselves, either to reform, or to advance in corruption. In a Presbyterian church however, though as many should become corrupt, the faithful majority can exercise the discipline over them with which they are invested; employ the same efficacious means for

their reformation which you acknowledge Chriſt has appointed to be uſed by a congregation towards its members; and if they ſhould reſiſt theſe means, finally pronounce on them the ſame ſentence to which you alſo allow individuals are expoſed. I am truly aſtoniſhed then, that while ſuch is the nature of Preſbytery, when adminiſtered according to its original deſign and by faithful men, that it is as much fitted to exclude corruption from the moſt extenſive church, or to reform it, as the government eſtabliſhed in your connection is to prevent the corruption of a particular individual, you ſhould endeavour to repreſent Preſbytery as ſo favourable to error, and ſo inimical to reform. Nor am I leſs ſurpriſed, when you attempt to inſinuate that this charge does not ſtrike with its utmoſt force againſt Independency—a ſyſtem which gives no authority except to a ſingle congregation over its own members; under which, a hundred congregations may embrace the moſt pernicious opinions, and perſiſt in them without cenſure and without puniſhment.

You indeed aſk (p. 54.), "How does Preſbytery tend "to prevent corruption? Not by admonition and per- "ſuaſion. Theſe, indeed, it does not exclude, but this is "a kind of influence which is acknowledged in its fulleſt "latitude by Independent churches; and therefore re- "ſpecting the propriety of adopting it there is no diſ- "pute. The ſtern tone of authority, then, is the only "method of preventing corruption by which Preſbytery "is diſtinguiſhed. It indeed, like other modes of com- "pulſion, may produce hypocriſy, but it can never pro- "mote ſpiritual obedience. It was never a kind of in- "fluence ſanctioned by Him who reigns over a willing "people."

Preſbyterian courts however, as was already proved, while they employ authority, uſe alſo admonition and perſuaſion. Nor is their authority more ſtern or compulſatory than that which is exerciſed by the office-bearers

and members of an Independent congregation over an offending brother. Do not the governors of such a congregation add to the means of advice and persuasion a higher act of authority, by inflicting on him a most awful punishment, if he remain incorrigibly obstinate? And is the authority of a Presbyterian court, over an offending congregation, greater than this, or more incompatible with the use of persuasion and advice? Is it more calculated to produce hypocrisy, as you are so charitable as to allege? Is it more inconsistent with the influence which is sanctioned by Him who reigns over a willing people? Or on what principle can you explain the extraordinary difficulty attending the Independent system, that while a power to punish a particular member is allowed to be necessary for preserving the purity of the congregation to which he belongs, a similar power is denied to a superior court, and a whole congregation suffered to embrace the most dangerous opinions without the possibility of being censured or punished?

You will however probably say, that as soon as the majority in a Presbyterian connection become corrupt, all the evils which you describe are found to be realized. It is true indeed, that, when perverted from its original design, like many other things which in themselves are good, Presbytery may produce the worst of consequences; and it is even granted, that as, when properly and conscientiously administered, it is productive of greater good than Independency, when corrupted and misapplied, it may, in one view, be attended with greater evils. The question however, in the present discussion, certainly is, not what system, when perverted from its original end, is calculated to produce the *least evil*, but what system, when conducted according to its design, is calculated to produce the greatest good? Your objection is therefore completely irrelevant, because it rests on a mistake about the point in dispute, as well as on a principle long ex-

ploded by ſcripture, philoſophy, and common ſenſe, that *the abuſe of a thing is a valid argument againſt its utility.*

By adopting this principle, you invalidate the authority of the moſt important inſtitutions, and ſet aſide many in which you yourſelf firmly believe. On this ground, for inſtance, as *a ſtanding miniſtry*, when proſtituted to the purpoſes of error and worldlineſs, is much more fitted to diſſeminate corruption and prevent reform than *private inſtruction* is, it ſhould be laid aſide; and we ought to believe, with a certain ſect of levellers, that miniſters of the goſpel are no longer neceſſary, but every Chriſtian himſelf ſhould teach his neighbour, and every Chriſtian his brother, to know the Lord. On the ſame ground alſo, ſince *civil government*, when adminiſtered by rulers who are unfaithful, is no leſs fitted, by its ſubordination of courts, to propagate moſt extenſively *every ſpecies of corruption*, and to preſent an unſurmountable obſtacle to reform, it ought to be laid aſide; and all the nations of men, correcting thoſe errors into which, by your reaſoning, they have in every age fallen, ſhould at once aboliſh their civil courts of review, break down their kingdoms into a countleſs multitude of little principalities, and make each of them entirely independent of the reſt. Without this you may allege, againſt the preſent conſtitution of almoſt every nation on earth, as you do againſt Preſbytery, that as ſoon as corruption infects the majority in the ſuperior courts, from the power with which they are inveſted over the reſt, they can force their purer brethren, however reluctantly, to aſſimilate themſelves to their corrupt ſtandard. If, for example, in a kingdom, one city after another, and one ruler after another, begin to loſe ſight of political juſtice; whenever the greater part of the rulers in the ſuperior courts of the kingdom does ſo, the reſt, however much diſpoſed, can no longer maintain it. If a degenerate individual, in one of the purer cities, feel himſelf ag-

grieved by the decision of its rulers, an appeal to the majority, in the superior courts, secures the immediate reversal of their sentence. This system, then, tends to drag down those who would act on the principles of equity to a conformity to such as have departed from them. Again, it equally tends to prevent reform. If, amidst general political corruption in a kingdom, a spirit of reform should appear in the governors of a single city, the authority of the rest is a bar in its way. This, we believe, in such cases, would be severely felt. Suppose the governors of some of these cities (and in some instances, we trust, even in corrupt kingdoms, it is not merely matter of supposition), in the progress of their inquiries respecting political justice, are convinced that it is very partially, if at all maintained in their cities—admitting that even a majority of the people held the same sentiments; is it not obvious, that unless the superior courts in general were of a similar opinion, any attempt at reformation, in any of these cities, would prove nugatory and vain. The same inconvenience would not follow, were every kingdom upon earth, however, split down into as many independent political societies as there were cities, or towns, or villages in it. We are far from insinuating that any form of political government presents an effectual bar to that corruption to which all institutions, conducted by depraved and fallible men, are liable; but admitting among these independent political societies the most general departure from the principles of justice and integrity to prevail, if, in the midst of this, an individual village, or town, or city, is led to study greater rectitude, the system at least presents no external obstacle to counteract it. If then you would not maintain that civil government, in every form almost in which it at present exists in the world, is absurd and pernicious, because, when its administrators are depraved, it is capable, as extensively as Presbytery itself, by its courts of review, to

propagate corruption and prevent reform, on what principle, I demand, can you affert that Preſbytery, with its courts of review, is dangerous and reprehenſible, becauſe, when the majority of its adminiſtrators may differ from you in their views of doctrine and their ideas of diſcipline, they have it in their power to propagate what you would diſtinguiſh by the name of corruption, and prevent reform? And if, notwithſtanding the evils which may be occaſioned by a *perverted uſe* of the former, you would not contend that every town or village in our native country, and even in every country, ſhould be converted into an *independent political* government, on what grounds can you conclude, from the poſſible evils which *may* reſult from the *perverted uſe* of the latter, eſpecially as liberty of ſeparation is acknowledged by it, that the church at large ſhould be broken down into *independent religious* ſocieties, and that there ſhould be as many *independent eccleſiaſtical governments* as there are individual congregations on the face of the earth?

The great object of inquiry in our examination of different forms of government, ſacred or civil, ſhould undoubtedly be, which of them, when acted upon *according to its end*, is beſt fitted to prevent *the entrance* of corruption among ſocieties as well as individuals; not, which of them is moſt calculated, when *miſapplied from that end*, and conducted by men whoſe principles and practice may appear to us to be wrong, to be productive of *the greateſt evil?* Examining then, by this ſtandard, the oppoſite ſchemes of Preſbytery and Independency, I think it is manifeſt from the preceding remarks, that the preference is certainly due to the former. If conſcientiouſly managed, by men who experience the influence of the goſpel, the rulers of each of its individual congregations can exerciſe towards all as much ſtrictneſs of diſcipline as the moſt zealous governors of any Independent ſociety can exerciſe towards their members.

And, at the ſame time, while Independency has not a ſingle court which can judge or puniſh a *whole erring congregation*, but allows them, though they ſhould proceed to the moſt dreadful extremes of error or depravity, to paſs uncenſured by any eccleſiaſtical tribunal, Preſbytery has courts which can inflict upon any obſtinate offending congregation, or even a hundred ſuch congregations, the ſame ſalutary puniſhment, to reclaim and reform them, which Independents can inflict upon any individual of their members. And, upon the whole, while Independency, as was already demonſtrated in the *ſecond* of theſe Letters, has not a ſingle court which can procure redreſs to any of its members, though he be treated with the *utmoſt cruelty* and *tyranny* by any of its congregations, Preſbytery, by its courts, when they are conducted upon the principles of equity and fidelity, preſents to the pooreſt individual in a congregation a mean of immediate and complete ſatisfaction, even for *the leaſt act of injuſtice* by a Seſſion, or Preſbytery, or a whole Synod. From theſe views, then, I ſtill maintain that the Preſbyterian ſyſtem ought unqueſtionably to be preferred to that of Independency, and that the latter ſhould be ſet aſide as inimical to the deareſt rights and privileges of Chriſtians as individuals, as well as the united intereſts of the whole church of God.

In the 3d place, It is a principle revealed in ſcripture, and a principle acknowledged by you as well as many Independents, that *miniſters alone* are authorized to ordain. Now, if an Independent congregation be deſtitute of paſtors, and if, after they are choſen by the people, agreeably to ſcripture and the uniform practice of your ſiſter-churches, miniſters be brought from other congregations to ordain them to their charge, is not this a *practical* renunciation of that firſt principle of Independency which we are now examining, and a ſubjecting the congregation over which they are placed, together with

the paſtors, to the performance of a moſt important act of government by the miniſters of churches entirely different? Is not this confeſſedly an act of adminiſtration as intereſting as any which is performed even among Independents, and yet is it not diſcharged to any congregation which ſolicits it, by perſons who are neither miniſters nor members of that congregation? Beſides, does it not involve in it the exerciſe of all inferior branches of authority? Is it not plain that if it is their province to ſet apart theſe members of this other congregation to the work of the miniſtry, it is their province alſo to examine them as to their fitneſs to be inveſted with that office, for, without this, will it not follow that if a congregation has erred in its choice of paſtors, ordination by the former will only tend to confirm their error, and admit thoſe who are totally unqualified to this important function? And does not the ſcripture declare, that when candidates for the miniſtry are ordained by miniſters, hands are not ſuddenly to be laid upon them; that they muſt be ſatisfied as to their qualifications, and muſt perſonally be convinced that they are faithful men, able to teach others the doctrines of the goſpel? But if every paſtor of ſuch a congregation muſt ſubmit to the ſcrutiny of the paſtors and office-bearers of *other* congregations before he is ordained, even *after he has been choſen by the vote of the people*, is not this recogniſing the right of theſe paſtors to exerciſe a very important act of authority over him and the congregation? Is it not inveſting them with all the power of *a court of review*, while yet they are unwilling to grant them the name? And is it not obvious, that if the paſtors alone of other congregations can ordain a perſon to the work of the miniſtry in a congregation which is totally deſtitute of paſtors, it is to them alone that he can be amenable for any act of maladminiſtration which he may be permitted to commit; and it is by them alone that he can be depoſed, if he

walk unworthily of his sacred function. In fine, though it should not be admitted by some Independents, that a meeting of the ministers of *other* churches is *necessary* for the ordination of the pastor or minister of a particular congregation, yet if it be granted, with others of them, to be *lawful* and desirable, it seems undeniably to follow, in opposition to a favourite principle of Independency, that ordination is either not an act of government, or that it is lawful and desirable even among Independents, that a congregation, in many instances, should be subject to one of the highest acts of power that can be exercised by the ministers and office-bearers of other congregations? Since then it appears to be evident from the sacred volume, that ministers alone are authorized to ordain *, and since it

* That ministers alone can ordain ministers, was attempted to be proved in a former Letter. In addition to the arguments which were then stated, it was neglected to be mentioned that considerable stress has been laid by some, for the confirmation of this sentiment, upon the appointment of Paul, and his fellow-labourer Barnabas, to an important mission, as related in the thirteenth chapter of the Acts. Even admitting it has been said, with some advocates for lay-preaching, that it is not their ordination to the office of the ministry, but simply their being set apart to a particular work, which is there referred to, yet as it is evident that they were thus set apart by ministers of the gospel, and them alone (compare ver. 1. and 3.), the argument which is presented by it, for the right of ministers alone to ordain, must be doubly stronger. If ministers alone can set apart those who are already ordained to a particular work, much more must it be manifest that they alone can perform this *higher* work, and invest them with their office. At any rate, it seems plain that the observation of Mr. Ewing, which has been represented by some as completely invalidating any such conclusion from this passage, is unjust and contradictory. "It is remarkable," says he, p. 6. of his Remarks upon a Sermon published by Mr. Dick, "that where-"ever ordination, by the instrumentality of *man*, is spoken of, "the words are quite different from that which is used in the "text before us; whereas when any word at all related to the "one in the text occurs, in the sense of ordination, it uniformly

is admitted by many of our modern Independents, that it is either *lawful* or *neceſſary* that they alone ſhould perform this act, it ſeems to be an unavoidable conſequence, if they would be conſiſtent either with ſcripture or with themſelves, that each of their congregations is not to be *independent* in *every inſtance*, but that, in many caſes, it is either *lawful* or *neceſſary* that it ſhould be ſubject to one of the higheſt acts of authority by the miniſters and office-bearers of *other* churches.

In the 4th place, If the paſtors of a particular congregation become heretical or immoral, and perſiſt in theſe evils, in *another* point of light, even upon *Independent* principles, a court of review appears neceſſary to *judge* them. The members of the congregation, according to the acknowledged tenets of all Independents, are not entitled in the firſt inſtance to judge, but are merely allowed to *acquieſce* and *conſent* to the propoſals of their office-bearers. But if not *a ſingle office-bearer* is left in the congregation who retains his authority, how can the members take cognizance of their paſtors, ſince it is their

" ſignifies the ordination or ſovereign appointment of God." Are we not expreſsly told in the beginning of this chapter, that while " certain prophets and teachers miniſtered to the Lord, and faſt-" ed, the Holy Ghoſt ſaid to *them*, Separate me Barnabas and " Paul, for the work whereunto I have called them?" And would not any unprejudiced perſon, who looked no farther *than the preſent paſſage*, ſuppoſe, upon the firſt peruſal of theſe verſes, that it was an appointment, or ſeparation, by men, and not by God, which was here intended by this expreſſion? If Mr. Ewing's very bold and unqualified aſſertion however, reſpecting the ſeparation which is here mentioned, even though but to a particular miſſion, be admitted to be juſt, the following muſt be the meaning of the inſpired hiſtorian: " While theſe prophets and teachers " miniſtered and faſted, the Holy Ghoſt appeared to them, and " commanded *himſelf* to *ſeparate* to *himſelf* Barnabas and Paul"— a ſuppoſition at once the moſt abſurd and ridiculous, and no leſs inconſiſtent with the character of Luke as a man of ſenſe, than with his more extraordinary endowments as an apoſtle.

province only to expreſs their *concurrence* in the propoſals of their office-bearers, and not nominally themſelves to act as *judges*? Is it ſaid, that they may withdraw from the miniſtration of theſe paſtors? It is replied, that this meaſure cannot conſiſtently be adopted till their paſtors be tried, and be proved to be guilty. But how can this be done, if there be no court ſuperior to a particular congregation? Beſides, it is evident that paſtors, who perſiſt in hereſy or immorality, are not only to be deprived of the particular charge over which they are placed, but are ſolemnly to be depoſed, as no longer miniſters of the goſpel of Chriſt. But if there be no court ſuperior to a particular congregation; who are the perſons that are thus to depoſe them, if they perſiſt in theſe evils, allowing that this congregation has withdrawn from their miniſtrations?

And 5thly, If every particular congregation, however ſmall, is, in every caſe, to be the final judge in every point of government, this plan ſeems to be leſs fitted to ſecure an enlightened and candid adminiſtration than that of Preſbytery.

Let it be ſuppoſed for a moment (and nothing leſs can be ſuppoſed, to give juſtice to the argument), that Preſbyterian miniſters are as pious and zealous for the intereſts of religion as members of any Independent congregation, and ſee which of theſe plans is moſt happily calculated to provide an enlightened and impartial adminiſtration. In the one caſe, a congregation of twenty, or thirty, or fifty members, a great proportion of whom are frequently perſons of feeble powers and limited information, are to be the ultimate judges in every buſineſs, however difficult and important, and no court upon earth can either amend or reverſe their deciſion. In the other, it is either determined by the wiſeſt and moſt judicious of a particular congregation, together with the miniſter, under the review and controul of the wiſeſt and moſt judi-

cious of *twenty*, or a *hundred*, or *ſeveral hundred* congregations, together with the paſtors; or it is this aſſembly itſelf which finally determines it. And, in the one caſe, it is decided by a little aſſembly, who "are more apt," as you acknowledge, p. 52. "to be influenced by "party-ſpirit, by perſonal animoſity, or by local pre-"judice." In the other, it is determined by this large aſſembly, the members of which, from their diſtance, their equal relation to the parties, and their previous freeneſs from perſonal diſlike, to which thoſe who reſide upon the ſpot, in your opinion, may be expoſed, are much more likely, as you honeſtly confeſs, to be candid and unbiaſſed. Whatever then may be *the conduct* of Preſbyterians and Independents, it appears to be undeniable, that when we conſider their different forms of government, on the ſuppoſition that the adminiſtrators of them are *equally faithful* and *equally conſcientious*, the ſcheme of the former is much better fitted than that of the latter to ſecure, in difficult and important matters, an enlightened and candid diſpenſation of juſtice.

Is it ſaid, that the members of a particular congregation are much more likely to be qualified to judge in matters which relate to itſelf, than the moſt numerous aſſembly of learned, and pious, and experienced men who live at a diſtance? It is anſwered, that if their judgment be fair and equitable, it ought to be founded upon nothing but what is publicly ſtated and fully canvaſſed; and may not all that information which is openly communicated before a whole congregation be communicated alſo before ſuch an aſſembly, who, by your own confeſſion, will be more candid and unprejudiced? Beſides, as is obſerved by Wood (againſt Lockier, p. 320.), "In addition to the buſineſſes of the exerciſe of diſcipline "about particular members of congregations, there are, "firſt, Matters of faith and of the worſhip of God to be "defined from the word of God; and contrary errors,

" hereſies, and corruptions, to be condemned and de-
" clared againſt. Secondly, There are matters of exter-
" nal order and policy, which are determined by the
" true light of nature, right reaſon, and general rules in
" ſcripture. Now, I do not think that Independents
" will take it upon them to aver, that a ſingle congre-
" gation are like in reaſon to be more learned, and ſo
" more advantaged to judge in matters of this kind,
" than all the able choice men, miniſters and elders from
" many congregations, aſſembled together in a Synod,
" or in a Claſſical Preſbytery. In the third place, To
" inſinuate that in buſineſſes of diſcipline about particular
" perſons there is no other matter to be cognoſced and
" determined but *queſtions of fact*, is another miſtake.
" For oftentimes in ſuch buſineſſes are involved intricate
" queſtions of law (or *juris*), as frequent experiences in
" the exerciſes and proceſſes of diſcipline, prove daily.
" Now although it be true that a particular congregation
" is like to be more learned, as to matters of mere fact
" in buſineſſes of particular members; yet it can hardly
" be ſaid in reaſon, that it is like they will be more
" learned in queſtions of law involved therein, than many
" choice able men from many congregations. And
" fourthly, Suppoſe the members of a particular congre-
" gation may be more learned in the buſineſſes which
" relate to themſelves, yet I ſuppoſe (that which is not
" unuſual to fall out) there may be differences among
" the elders, or between the elders and the people, or both
" may be divided in their judgments that nothing can
" be concluded amongſt them: what will you have
" done in ſuch a caſe?" Or is it remarked farther, that
though it may be expedient, from theſe things, to con-
vene meetings as numerous as poſſible of the miniſters
and office-bearers of other congregations to obtain their
advice, yet it would be utterly improper that a parti-
cular congregation ſhould ſubmit to their authority,

but that it ought ſtill to retain the power of deciſion? It is demanded, in reply, whether it can be ſo conducive to the intereſts of truth and equity to veſt ſuch a power of final determination in thoſe whom you admit to be "*more apt* to be influenced by party-ſpirit, by prejudice, "or by perſonal animoſity," than to commit it to this more candid as well as more enlightened aſſembly? If theſe circumſtances, in the one caſe, render it dangerous and prejudicial to the cauſe of juſtice that they ſhould *themſelves* determine without convening this aſſembly, and ſoliciting its advice, muſt they not render it alſo no leſs hazardous to it, that the power of ſupreme and ultimate deciſion ſhould be veſted in them, though they ſhould retain their prejudices after all that be ſaid to them? Even upon your own principles then, it appears to be undeniable, that the plan of Preſbytery, in this view alſo, is better fitted than that of Independency to provide at once for a more enlightened, and ſafe, and candid adminiſtration of eccleſiaſtical juſtice.

Beſides, if any of the members of a particular congregation exhibit a charge againſt the reſt of that congregation, and there be no ſuperior court; who are the arbiters that are to determine between them? Both are *parties*, and both conſider themſelves as equally aggrieved, and conſequently, by the rules of all conſiſtent governments, are totally diſqualified from judging in the difference. But upon the Independent plan, they are themſelves the only perſons who can act as arbiters; and this office, as was obſerved, ſince there is no ſuperior judicatory, they muſt ſtill perform, even though both are intereſted. Among Preſbyterians however, when any members of a congregation are injured by thoſe who are its elders or governors, they can ſummon theſe elders to a ſuperior court, which, if compoſed of upright and diſintereſted men, will judge impartially between both the parties. Nay, if this ſuperior

court ſtill ſeem to determine amiſs, they can appeal to a third, till at laſt they arrive at the higheſt ſubordinate court in the church. Thence, indeed, if ſtill denied a favourable deciſion, they can appeal to no ſuperior tribunal upon earth; but this ariſes only from the imperfection of the preſent ſtate of exiſtence, which grants not to any, during their earthly lives, when aggrieved by a ſupreme tribunal among men, to appeal to and obtain an audible verdict from the throne of God. Nor is this imperfection peculiar to eccleſiaſtical—it is common to it alſo with civil government. Among Independents, on the contrary, in the *very firſt inſtance*, when the minority are injured by the majority of a congregation, the only perſons who can judge of their complaint, are the very men who have committed the wrong; and whether ſuch a plan is as well fitted as that of Preſbytery, when faithfully adminiſtered, to provide for a candid diſpenſation of juſtice, it is left to the unprejudiced obſerver to ſay.

So far however, according to ſome, are theſe benefits from being the conſequences of an enlightened and faithful adminiſtration of Preſbytery, that the oppoſite evils, however it may be exerciſed, ſeem neceſſarily to reſult from it. "Farther," ſays Dr. Watts, in his Candid Inquiry, p. 175. before quoted, "to keep judges and party entirely diſtinct, hath been always an object to all lovers "of impartial juſtice; but Preſbytery often confounds "them. When the caſe concerns the exerciſe of church-"power, whether it be a remonſtrance from a church-"member againſt the deed of a court, or an appeal to "one ſuperior, from an inferior; whether it be a com-"plaint of an inferior court to a ſuperior, againſt ſuch "as may have refuſed due ſubmiſſion to its authority; "ſtill it is a caſe between church-officers and church-"members; and all the judges are of the former claſs. "If they decide againſt the court, they are in danger "of acting in a way unfriendly to church-power even

" in their own hands, and of encouraging a ſpirit of " anarchy among the people. Theſe views may have " often a greater influence, than the merits of the cauſe, " in framing the deciſion. We may thus ſee why a re- " monſtrant, or appellant, often loſes his cauſe in a ſupe- " rior court; and why the complaint of an inferior " court is ſo often redreſſed, and its ſentence affirmed."

But to this it is anſwered, that if *members* are permitted to ſit as judges in the caſe of *members*, there ſeems to be as much reaſon to fear that they may be diſpoſed to favour their brethren, as that *church-officers* will be diſpoſed to favour *church-officers*. Of conſequence it will follow upon this mode of reaſoning, that when a member has erred, it ought to be officers alone, in oppoſition to a favourite firſt principle of Independency, who ſhould be allowed to judge him; and when a church-officer errs, it ſhould be members alone, who have no office in the church, and who, even upon the ſyſtem of theſe gentlemen, have a right only to *acquieſce* in the propoſals of elders, that ſhould be permitted to determine. Or if it be alleged, that the court may be compoſed partly of thoſe who are members and partly of church-officers, it is replied, that the proportion of thoſe who are judges in Independent courts and are only members, is unfair and dangerous to the rights at leaſt of thoſe who are elders. In many congregations, the number of the former is fifty or ſixty times as great as that of the latter; and in moſt congregations, they are at leaſt ten or twenty times ſuperior in number. Is it not manifeſt then, that if this objection be valid when urged againſt Preſbytery, it is much more formidable when applied to Independency, where juſtice in no caſe, according to it, can be expected to be ſhewn to thoſe who are office-bearers, and where partiality in every caſe, from the vaſt preponderancy of members who are judges, may be dreaded towards members? Among Preſbyterians, on

the contrary, such iniquity, as far as the constitution is concerned, is totally impracticable. While the clergy form a distinguishing part of their courts, an *equal number* of laymen are admitted into them, without whose consent no decision can be passed, and who, representing at large the whole members in their congregations, are ever ready, as the guardians of their rights, to repel any attack which may be made upon their privileges. Thus, according to this candid and equitable plan, it is impossible for the clergy to domineer over the laity, or for the laity, forgetting their proper situation, to be guilty of a lawless and presumptuous invasion of the rights of the clergy, but distinguished alike by equality of numbers and equality of power, they serve mutually to check and restrain, and are prevented from attempting to tyrannise over each other: While upon the Independent plan, if this objection be conclusive, the members of the church, who constitute the greatest part of their courts, are no less disqualified from administering justice impartially to members, than, in another view, from judging in the cause of those who are church-officers.

LETTER XV.

SIR,

SATISFACTORY as may be the general arguments furnished either by reason or by scripture in support of any position, you will not deny that they must be still more convincing, when strengthened by the authority of apostolic example. That this additional evidence in favour of ecclesiastical courts of review can be produced, it shall now be my object to establish.

That courts of review existed among the Jews in the days of Christ, is a fact which few will controvert. Not

only were particular rulers appointed over ſynagogues, but, as was formerly ſhewn, a general council of ſcribes or doctors ſat at Jeruſalem, and decided in caſes of appeal from the inferior courts. Whether this was originally a divine inſtitution, or only an appointment of men, as expedient and uſeful, it ſeems to have obtained the approbation of our Saviour. Though he reprobated thoſe human inventions which were contrary to the precept or ſpirit of the law, he never cenſured this court; nay, inſtead of enjoining Nicodemus and Joſeph to reſign their places in it, he commanded his diſciples to obey its deciſions, and acknowledge its authority, as far as they were conſiſtent with the word of God. "Then ſpake Jeſus "to the multitude, and to his diſciples (Matth. xxiii. "1, 2, 3.), ſaying, The ſcribes and the Phariſees ſit in "Moſes' ſeat: all *therefore* whatſoever they bid you "obſerve, that obſerve and do; but do not ye after "their works: for they ſay, and do not." But how could he have thus ſpoken, if ſuch a court had appeared to him improper? Had ſuch an inſtitution been calculated to be productive of as much evil in the ancient church, as it is affirmed by Independents that a ſimilar court in the goſpel-church muſt neceſſarily occaſion, would he ever have required the Iſraelites at large, as well as his followers, to have acknowledged its authority? This argument acquires additional force, if we ſuppoſe that this court was not expreſsly appointed by the divine commandment, but was only ſimilar to that of the elders in the wilderneſs, which, according to ſome, had for a long time been diſcontinued. If ſuch a court, though not divinely commanded, but founded ſimply on the general principle of utility, was approved of by our Saviour in the ancient church, muſt not correſponding courts in the Chriſtian church be *equally worthy* of our approbation and ſubmiſſion for the very ſame reaſons,

even though it could not be eſtabliſhed that ſuch courts were explicitly enjoined by ſcripture * ?

But it is not merely among the ancient Jews that this court exiſted with the divine approbation; in many of the cities where Chriſtianity was preached in the primitive ages, a ſimilar inſtitution appears to have obtained. In theſe cities there was not only a number of particular congregations which had each their ſeparate and reſpective office-bearers, but they were placed under the ſuperintendence of a general court, to which, as well as to its own paſtors and elders, each of them individually was conſidered as ſubject.

That ſuch a court exiſted in Epheſus, Corinth, and Rome, might eaſily be proved by an induction of particulars. At preſent we ſhall conſider only whether it was eſtabliſhed in the church at Jeruſalem, which may juſtly be regarded as the parent-ſociety of all Chriſtian churches, and its government as the faireſt model of theirs.

Now, that in this church there were not only miniſters, as Preſbyterians would ſay, who ſuperintended the affairs of particular congregations, but a Preſbytery, conſiſting of the office-bearers of all the congregations in Jeruſalem, which watched over the intereſts and concerns of the whole, we hope will appear, if it be proved in the 1ſt place, That there was a greater number of believers in that city than could poſſibly meet for the purpoſes of worſhip in one place; and 2dly, That the

* That our Saviour, in this paſſage, admits both the propriety and the authority of this Jewiſh court, is evident from this, that the ſcribes and Phariſees, who compoſed the ſanhedrin, had a power of authoritative review and controul over the teachers and governors of every particular ſynagogue, and conſequently we cannot ſuppoſe that he would have required the Jews to ſubmit to the latter without acknowledging the former. This indeed was impoſſible, for every ſcribe and Phariſee was ſubject, both in doctrine and diſcipline, to this ſuperintending judicatory.

elders of these different congregations are represented as associated in one general court, for regulating what related to their common benefit, as well as deciding in cases of appeal or complaint.

It will appear, if it be proved in the 1st place, That there was a greater number of Christians in that city than could possibly meet for the purposes of worship in any one place.

The account which is delivered in the Acts of the Apostles of the success of the gospel, and of the number of followers which obtained in Jerusalem, favours this idea.

We have little positive information with regard to the real number of converts to the gospel during the personal ministry of the Saviour. If we attend however to the number of ministers who were engaged along with him in preaching the word, and the expressions employed to intimate his success, it will be found to have been considerable. Twelve apostles and seventy disciples laboured together with him in disseminating the gospel; and such was their progress in this blessed work, that not only did their adversaries remark (John xii. 19.) that "*the world* "had gone after them," but it is declared (John iv. 1.) "that they heard that Jesus *made* and *baptized* more disciples than John"—of whom it is said (Mark i. 5.), "that there went out unto him *all* the land of Judea, "and they of Jerusalem, and were *all* baptized of him *."

* It is granted indeed, that the number of converts at this period was small, compared at least with those who should afterwards believe in consequence of his ascension, because, as Jesus tells us (John vii. 39.), "the Spirit was not yet given," *i. e.* so abundantly, "because Jesus was not yet glorified." And it was small too, contrasted with what might naturally have been expected from the personal ministration of so illustrious a character as Jehovah incarnate. Hence we find the Redeemer complaining, in the strong language of metaphor, by the prophet Isaiah (chap. xlix. 4.), "because he seemed to have laboured in vain, and to

Whatever was their number, we know that they included at leaſt more than five hundred, for we are told by Paul (1 Cor. xv. 6.), that Jeſus was ſeen after his reſurrection by more than five hundred brethren at once; and it is probable from what has been ſaid, that many more had attached themſelves to the profeſſion of Chriſtianity *. To that proportion of them which dwelt at Jeruſalem, a great addition was made on the day of Pentecoſt, for, "on the ſame day," ſays Luke (Acts ii. 41.), "there were joined to the church about *three thou-* "*ſand ſouls*." Nor were theſe *three thouſand ſouls*, Jews who had come up to the city of Jeruſalem merely to wait upon the feaſt, and who immediately returned to their native countries, as Independents have aſſerted. As is remarked by the Weſtminſter Aſſembly of Divines, p. 38. "The Jews that dwelt without the land of Ca- "naan were not bound to appearance at the feſtivals "there. Nor, ſecondly, was it poſſible that they ſhould "do ſo, if they had been commanded, unleſſe they did "nothing almoſt the whole year but go up to Jeruſalem,

"have ſpent his ſtrength for nought, and in vain;" and his ſervants aſking (chap liii. 1.), "Who hath believed our report? "and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Compare John xii. 37, 38. It is plain however, from the context in the firſt of theſe places, and from the quotation and application of the laſt of them in Rom. x. 16. that they refer not only to Chriſt's perſonal miniſtry, but to the whole of the ſpace after his aſcenſion till the goſpel was preached very generally to the Gentiles; and therefore muſt be underſtood, like all ſtrongly figurative prophetic language, in a reſtricted ſenſe, ſince it appears from the New Teſtament, that many thouſands and ten thouſands of Jews, during that period, were converted to the faith.

* When the ſeventy alſo, it might have been mentioned, returned from their miſſion, they reported to Jeſus, that they ſaw Satan falling like lightning from heaven, which certainly imports that very great ſucceſs had attended their labours, and that a very great number of converts had believed in the Saviour.

" and home again, their habitation being ſome of them " ſo many months journey diſtant. Thirdly, What had " the diſperſed Jews to do at the feaſt of Harveſt (for " ſo it is called, Exod. xxiii. 16.), when their harveſt, in " very many of thoſe places where they dwelt, was not " yet begun? And fourthly, If their diſtance from " Jeruſalem made them to chooſe to come up but to " ſome one of the feaſts, and omit the reſt, why to " Pentecoſt, which was the leaſt ſolemn of the three, " rather than to the Paſſover or Tabernacles, theſe two " being ſolemnities for a whole week, Pentecoſt but for " *a day.*" Wherefore they obſerve, " Fifthly, We pro- " duce a more probable reaſon of this matchleſſe and un- " paralleled concourſe at this time, for ſo we doubt not " to call it, *viz.* that the Jews had learned by the ſcrip- " ture, and eſpecially out of the Propheſie of *Daniel*, " that this was the time when the kingdom of heaven " ſhould appear, as it is apparent both out of Luke, chap. " xix. ver. 11. and out of the Jews own authors, and " therefore came in thoſe multitudes to Jeruſalem, and " there ſettled to dwell, to ſee the fulfilling of thoſe " things that all the nations ſo much looked after."

Beſides, we are told in Acts ii. 5. that theſe Jews, who are ſaid in the 41ſt verſe to have been added to the church, had dwelt for a conſiderable time at Jeruſalem, and were then reſiding there. Such, according to the authority of Mintert, is the term κατοικεῖν, there employed in the original to ſignify their reſidence; " for it " properly denotes, in the Greek writers, a certain *fixed* " and *durable dwelling*, and is oppoſed to παροικεῖν, which " ſignifies to ſojourn or dwell in a place for a time only." And Suicer, on the word, obſerves, that " παροικεῖν pro- " perly ſignifies to be a ſtranger or ſojourner in a place, " and that, in the ancient gloſſes, κατοικεῖν, the word " employed in Acts, means to dwell or reſide ſtatedly: " Quod apud veteres gloſſas, *habito, incolo.*" The ſame

distinction is preserved in innumerable instances in the Septuagint, and very generally in the New Testament. The former term, for example, is used in Gen. xii. 10. Luke xxiv. 18. *&c.* to signify a sojourner: and the latter, in Gen. xlvi. 34. to express the residence of the Israelites in Egypt, which was for *several hundred years;* in Numb. xiii. 28, 29. to denote the residence of the Amalekites and Canaanites in their respective countries before they were attacked by the Israelites, which comprehended *a still greater portion of time;* the residence of the saints at Lydda, to whom Peter came (Acts ix. 32.), which was stated and permanent; and of Joseph in Nazareth (Matth. ii. 23.), where, according to Eusebius and Epiphanius, he was at least about four years. The only places, in short, where κατοικεω signifies to dwell for a shorter period, are in the Septuagint version of 1 Kings xvii. 20. where, however, it denotes a residence for not less than *a year;* and of Jer. xlii. 15. where it is used to express the residence of the Jewish captains under Johanan, in the land of Egypt, till the danger which they apprehended should be over, but in which place it means a residence in that country which might have been expected to be protracted for a very considerable space *. But, in opposition to this, there is a countless multitude of instances in the Septuagint, where κατοικεω, the word which is here used by Luke, can signify neither a residence for *a few days* only, as Independents suppose to have been the case with these proselytes at the feast of Pentecost, nor even for a year, as when it is ap-

* Since writing the above, I find that it is employed also in the Septuagint version of Lev. xxiii. 42. where the Lord commands the Israelites, that every year, at the feast of Tabernacles, "they should dwell in booths seven days." But it is evident, that though it is here used to denote their dwelling in booths, though but for seven days, it is in allusion to the residence of their fathers in them for forty years, of which this was the emblem. See ver. 43.

plied to Elijah, but for a much longer period *. Nor will it suffice to disprove this to tell us, that some of them are represented by Peter (Acts ii. 9.) as dwelling in Mesopotamia and other places which are there mentioned, and consequently they could not be statedly residing at Jerusalem. This only describes the places where they had dwelt before they came to Jerusalem, and from which, of course, they received their appellation; but it will not demonstrate, in opposition to the 5th verse, and the most general acceptation of the verb κατοικεω, that they were not statedly dwelling, at that period, in that city. Nor can it be proved that they were merely sojourning in Jerusalem, because they are said in the 5th verse, only to be dwelling *in* Jerusalem, εν Ιερουσαλημ, and in ver. 9. agreeably to the original, to inhabit Mesopotamia and these other countries, κατοικειν Μεσοποταμιαν, &c. for as Independents would not allow, when we hear of the apostles and elders *in* Jerusalem (Acts xvi. 4.), that it means only that they had a temporary residence in Jerusalem, on what principle can they attach this meaning to that expression in the present passage? We see, moreover, that all of these strangers who are mentioned by Luke, in the second chapter of the Acts, are represented by Peter (ver. 23, 24.), not only as contributing to the death, but as witnessing the miracles of the blessed Saviour, which they could not have done, had they not for a considerable time been dwelling at Jerusalem. *Wherever* they had formerly dwelt, it would appear that henceforth they made choice

* See, out of the many instances which might be adduced, the following examples: Gen. xi. 2. 31. xiii. 6, 7. 12. 18. xiv. 7. 12. xix. 25. 29, 30. xx. 15. xxi. 20, 21. xxii. 19. xxiv. 62. xxv. 11. xxvi. 6. xxxiv. 10. 22, 23. Exod. ii. 15. Numb. xiii. 19. 28, 29. Deut. i. 4. 44. ii. 4. xix. 1. xxix. 16. Joshua i. 14. Judges x. 1. 2 Sam. ii. 3.

of Jeruſalem as their future habitation; for we are told in ver. 44, 45, 46. that "all who believed were *together*, "and had all things in common; and ſold their poſſeſ- "ſions (whether in diſtant countries or at Jeruſalem), "and parted them to all men, as every man had need: "and *they* continuing daily with one accord in the "temple, and breaking bread from houſe to houſe, did "eat their meat with gladneſs and ſingleneſs of heart." Surely when their poſſeſſions in diſtant countries were ſold, we may well ſuppoſe that they would reſide at Jeruſalem, to enjoy the benefit of the miniſtrations of the apoſtles. And indeed it ſeems impoſſible to explain the expreſſions which are here employed to denote their fellowſhip with the church at Jeruſalem, without admitting the truth of this idea. Here then are at leaſt above *three thouſand* Jews who were members of this church; and if we conſider what is ſaid of the ſucceſs of Chriſt's miniſtry, and the concourſe of his diſciples, which in all probability would take place to Jeruſalem from other quarters, as ſoon as they heard of the preaching of the apoſtles, it is likely that they amounted to a much greater number *.

Glorious however as were theſe firſt triumphs of the goſpel in the city of Jeruſalem, they were followed by others no leſs diſtinguiſhed. "The Lord," we are told, Acts ii. 47. after this firſt great converſion, "added "*daily* to the church ſuch as ſhould be ſaved." And in chap. iv. 4. that, after a ſermon from Peter, "many of "them who heard the word believed; and the number "of the men was about *five thouſand*." Here the ſacred hiſtorian does not record merely, as Independents inſinuate, the number of them who *heard*, but of them who *believed* in conſequence of this diſcourſe, for

* The church at Jeruſalem was, for a conſiderable time, the only Chriſtian ſociety which exiſted in the world.

he is contrasting the happy effects which attended the apostles preaching, with the violence and cruelties which were exercised towards them: "Howbeit, many who "heard the word *believed;* and the number of the men "was about five thousand." It would evidently have been no compensation for the sufferings of the apostles to tell us, that five thousand persons *heard* their sermons, though it must have been very consolitary to know that *five thousand believed.*

Besides, as the three thousand converted on the day of Pentecost, did not include the hundred and twenty mentioned in the first chapter of the book of the Acts, so the five thousand who are here spoken of, do not comprehend the three thousand who are before mentioned. In *every other passage* of the book of the Acts where Luke describes the number of those who were converted, either upon hearing a sermon or beholding a miracle, he mentions solely those *new believers* who were added to the church, and does not state the number of the whole; and consequently it is extremely improbable indeed, that he should depart from this peculiarity in the present passage. Accordingly we find that Chrysostom, Irenæus, Jerome, Augustine, with many others of the ancient fathers, so understood the passage. In short, as the Jews were accustomed in their calculations to enumerate only the males, and as we find the term ανδρες, or men, which is here employed, used repeatedly in calculations in the New Testament * to signify males as distinguish-

* See John vi. 10. where it is said, that Jesus fed five thousand men by a particular miracle: "So *the men* sat down, in number "about five thousand, ανδρες." And compare Matth. xiv. 21. From which it appears that the term in John denotes *only males*, for it is said by that evangelist, that the number of those who were fed at this very miracle was *five thousand men*, besides women and children. "Ανηρ," too, says a very accurate scholar, respecting the word here employed, "differs as much in signification

ed from females, it is probable that it is ſo to be underſtood in the verſe before us, and that, beſides the men, there was a multitude alſo of *female* converts. Here then are five thouſand, who, when added to the number of previous converts, make the whole amount to near *nine thouſand* members, beſides a conſiderable proportion of females. And even though it were allowed, in oppoſition to the uſual manner of Luke, that he intended to inform us, not of the number who were converted upon this particular occaſion, but of the number of the members of the church in general, it is plain that they comprehended *five thouſand males*, beſides ſeveral thouſands of believing females *.

But great as was the number of diſciples at Jeruſalem, at the period referred to, it did not reſt here. While the people magnified the apoſtles for the extraordinary miracle performed at the death of Ananias and Sapphira, it is ſaid, Acts v. 14. "that believers were *the more* added "to the Lord, *multitudes* both of men and women, πληθη." And again, we are told, Acts vi. 7. that "the word of "God *increaſed*; and the number of the diſciples *multi-*

"from ανθρωπος, in Greek, as *vir* does from *homo*, in Latin. To "this difference the ſacred writers always attend. A remarkable "inſtance of it we have, 1 Tim. ii. 1.—9. When ſpeaking of our "race in general, Paul ſays, *I entreat that prayers be made for all "men*, ανθρωπων—who will have *all men* to be *ſaved*, ανθρωπους— "*the Mediator between God and men*, ανθρωπων. But when the "apoſtle comes to ſpeak of the duties proper for the different "ſexes, he ſays, *I will that men pray every where*, τους ανδρας. *In "like manner, that women*, &c. γυναικας. In the 8th and follow-"ing verſes of the chapter, he ſeems to ſpeak of the duties of "perſons employed in a family-capacity." Robertſon on Lay-preaching, p. 20.

* If we may judge of the number of female converts at that period from what it has been at every other time with which we are acquainted, we may ſafely conclude that it muſt have exceeded at leaſt that of the males.

" *plied* in Jeruſalem *greatly*; and *a great company of the* " *prieſts* were obedient to the faith." And indeed if *a great company of the prieſts*, the chief opponents of Chriſtianity, and men whoſe example was ſo much followed by the people, became obedient to the faith, we may well ſuppoſe that the additions which at this period were made to the church muſt have been uncommonly great. Here then we have a collection of at leaſt *ten or twelve thouſand* Chriſtians in the city of Jeruſalem, who were all not only hearers but members of the church, and probably they conſiſted of a much greater number. Nor is this to be wondered at, when we conſider the abundant communication of the Spirit, which at that time attended the miniſtration of the goſpel; the wide diffuſion of the word of truth, for the apoſtles are repreſented by their enemies (Acts v. 28.) as even "*filling* Jeruſalem " with their doctrine;" and the vaſt number of inhabitants contained in that city, for it is evident, from the account delivered by Joſephus of its deſolation, that it muſt have been one of the moſt populous cities in the world *.

Is it ſaid however, as has frequently been done by Independents, that whatever was the number of the members at Jeruſalem, at the period which we have ſpecified, they were completely diſperſed at the perſecution which took place upon the death of Stephen? It is anſwered, that ſuch an inference ſeems by no means deducible from the language of Luke, in recording the effects of the perſecution which enſued on the death of that martyr; and in ſupport of this aſſertion, the following particulars are mentioned from the chapter where this perſecution is related.

* If many flocked into Jeruſalem before the ſiege of it by Veſpaſian, we know alſo, from the teſtimony of hiſtory, that many thouſands of Chriſtians, as well as others, left it, and made way for them.

In the 1ſt place, as is obſerved by a judicious writer already quoted *, " There is no evidence whatever, that " this perſecution was protracted beyond the day of " Stephen's martyrdom. The words of the hiſtorian," Acts viii. 1. εν εκεινη τη ἡμερᾳ, which are tranſlated in our verſion *at that time*, " literally mean on that day, or, more " emphatically, *on the ſame day*. Beſides, though the " term *day* is ſometimes uſed for an indefinite time in " prophetical language, yet never in a plain hiſtorical " narration. Luke is always accurate in the uſe of his " terms; and, when about to mention a period of time " more indefinitely, ſays either *in thoſe days*, Acts i. 15. " or *about that time*, Acts xii. 1. It may be ſuppoſed, " indeed, that for a few days, the Jewiſh council were " employed in trying the perſons impriſoned, and that " they inflicted upon them the only puniſhment which, " without the conſent of the Roman governor, it was " competent for them, that of beating in the ſynagogue. " It is probable however, that they durſt not farther " patroniſe any open perſecution in the city; nor do " they ſeem at all to have carried it to the neighbourhood. " When Saul, notwithſtanding the death of Stephen and " the puniſhment of others, ſtill breathed out threatening " and death againſt the diſciples of Jeſus, he obtained " from the chief prieſts letters to Damaſcus, which lay " beyond the limits of Herod's juriſdiction."

It is plain alſo in the 2d place, as was before ſtated, That the *all* who are ſaid (Acts viii. 1.) to have been ſcattered abroad except the apoſtles, were the miniſters, and not the members of that Chriſtian church; for we ſee that a church, conſiſting of members, remained in Jeruſalem (ver. 3.), after thoſe who are mentioned in the 1ſt verſe are repreſented as having been *all* ſcattered abroad except the apoſtles, and who conſequently could only be the other miniſters of the church.

* Mr. Robertſon, p. 37.

And 3dly, as is noticed by Mr. Robertſon in his Remarks, p. 41. and briefly hinted by Henry in his Commentary, The word διεσπαρησαν, which is rendered by our tranſlators (ver. 1.) "*were ſcattered abroad*," does not properly mean that they diſperſed in conſequence of very violent perſecution. "Theſe preachers of the "goſpel," ſays the firſt of theſe writers, p. 41. "did "not leave Jeruſalem, ſo much on account of the vio- "lence of the perſecution, as in obedience to the com- "mand of Chriſt, *When they perſecute you in one city, flee "ye into another:* Matth. x. 23. Certain it is that διασπειρω "does not ſo properly ſignify *to diſperſe by violence*, as "another verb, διασκορπιζω, which we find employed, "Matth. xxvi. 31. and Acts v. 37. The former word "implies no more than *to ſeparate*, by whatever means "that is effected. After the confuſion of tongues, God "is ſaid to have *ſcattered* men on the face of the earth, "διεσπειρεν, when, in the courſe of his providence, he "led them to ſettle at a diſtance from one another. "Many Jews were ſaid, in the time of our Saviour, to be "ſcattered among other nations, διασπορα, though their "exile was *voluntary*. It may be further obſerved, that "in all languages a verb in a paſſive form may ſome- "times have a neuter, or, as the Greeks ſay, a middle "ſignification. Such is the caſe with the very verb in "queſtion, as uſed in the Septuagint verſion of the Old "Teſtament *. When Pharaoh had denied ſtraw to the "Iſraelites, it is ſaid, *they were ſcattered abroad*, λαος "διεσπαρη; that is, they, of *their own accord*, went in "every direction in queſt of ſtubble. When, therefore, "the church at Jeruſalem is ſaid to be ſcattered abroad, "the meaning ſeems to be, that viewing the perſe- "cution raiſed againſt them as a ſignal to depart, they, "either of their own accord, or in concert with the

* See 1 Sam. xiv. 34. 2 Sam. xx. 21. *&c.*

" apoſtles, left the city, and diſtributed themſelves in " every direction. It is ſaid to have been *along* (κατα) " the regions of Judea and Samaria. Thus they either " choſe their directions, or had them pointed out to " them. Luke continues their hiſtory in a following " verſe: They then who had *diſperſed themſelves*, went " through the land preaching the word."

Viewing this paſſage then as a whole, the following appears to have been the real extent of that perſecution, which has ſo frequently been repreſented by Independents as completely diſperſing that Chriſtian church.

" On the ſame day in which Stephen was killed *, " many, relying on the protection of the Jewiſh rulers, " or acting under their authority, began to offer outrage " to the miniſters of the goſpel, who were preaching the " word. The fury of the former was ſo great, though " not ſaid to terminate in blood, that all the latter either " left the city, or ſo entirely diſappeared as to juſtify " the hiſtorian in ſaying, They were *all* ſcattered abroad. " In the mean time, which ſhews the perſecution was " not general, devout men, without moleſtation, carried " Stephen to his burial, and made a great lamentation " over him. As for Saul, he carried the perſecution " farther than his companions, for entering into the " houſes of private families, which were probably the " receptacles of thoſe who preached the doctrine of " Chriſt, he dragged both men and women to priſon †. " This would cauſe any few miniſters who might have " concealed themſelves, alſo to leave the city. As " Chriſtians would make no reſiſtance to their perſecu-

* See Robertſon's Remarks, p. 36.

† Κατα τους οικους, which is rendered by our tranſlators (Acts viii. 3.) " into every houſe," as properly ſignifies " into the houſes.' " This perſecution, moreover, might be ſtyled a great perſecution, " which, for a time, deprived the ſaints at Jeruſalem of ſo many " faithful paſtors."

" tors, ſo all might paſs without exciting ſuch confuſion " as to draw the attention of the Roman governor. It " farther appears, that the hotteſt perſecution was car- " ried on by Saul: *He made havock of the church.* But " wherein did that conſiſt? Not in ſhedding ſtreams of " blood. To that length, ſupported as he was by the " Jewiſh council, he durſt not proceed: But entering " into ſome of the houſes of the Chriſtians, he commit- " ted a few men and women to priſon. That either " the Jews ſhould have purpoſed to impriſon the great " body of Chriſtian converts, or that all theſe ſhould " have left the city for the impriſonment of a few, are " ideas too abſurd to need any anſwer."

But if ſuch only was the amount of the perſecution which is here related, it is plain that the members whom it took from that church (if it removed from it any) could not be conſiderable: and the loſs which was ſuſ- tained, we have reaſon to believe, was ſpeedily com- penſated, and more than compenſated, by the numerous converts that were added in their ſtead. We are told, that after the perſecution raiſed by Herod, in which only one perſon was put to death, " the word of God " *grew* and *multiplied:*" Acts xii. 24. And ſuch was its ſucceſs, that we are informed by James (Act; xxi. 20.), that it numbered among its followers at Jeruſalem " many myriads, or *ten thouſands* of Jews *." This ex- preſſion, indeed, Mr. Ewing, together with the ancient Independents, aſſerts " to be indefinite." " We rejoice," alſo adds he, p. 31. " in admitting that it ſignifies very " many. But the paſſage does not neceſſarily imply, " that James and the elders were ſpeaking of the num- " bers of believers in the city of Jeruſalem, but rather

* The words in the original are very ſtrong: " Thou ſeeſt, " brother," ſaid James to Paul, " *how many ten thouſands* of Jews " there are which believe, *ποσαι μυριαδες.*"

" of the numbers of believers of the Jewiſh nation *." Here it may be obſerved, that though we ſhould grant that μυριοι is ſometimes underſtood by the ſacred writers in an indefinite ſenſe, ſo as to ſignify a number leſs than *ten thouſand*, yet it does not hold with regard to μυριας, the word here employed. The latter, in Acts xix. 19. Luke xii. 1. Heb. xii. 22. Jude 14. and Rev. v. 11. which are all the places where it occurs in the New Teſtament, cannot mean leſs than the literal number, and in ſome of them evidently, if taken indefinitely, muſt ſignify more †. Beſides, according to the interpretation

* It is ſomewhat remarkable, that while this gentleman profeſſes his joy at the great number of Jews who believed in Jeruſalem, he attempts to make it as ſmall as poſſible. And it is very extraordinary, that while Independents endeavour to prove, againſt infidels, the divinity of Chriſtianity from its aſtoniſhing ſucceſs in the early ages, they ſhould virtually ſtrengthen the hands of theſe infidels, by endeavouring to ſhew that in a city which, for almoſt thirty years, had witneſſed more of the miracles, and enjoyed more of the ableſt preaching of the goſpel, than any other place, no more converts were found among thoſe who were its inhabitants than could eaſily aſſemble for worſhip, or government, in *a ſingle congregation !!!*

† In the firſt of theſe paſſages, the ſum at which the books of the Epheſians were valued, is ſaid to be πεντε μυριαδες αργυριου, which is literally " five myriads," or, according to our tranſlators, " fifty thouſand pieces of ſilver," where evidently the expreſſion cannot be underſtood as ſignifying leſs than ten thouſands. In the ſecond of them, believers are ſaid, in the original, to come to an aſſembly " of myriads of angels," και μυριασιν αγγελων; and in the third, it is declared that when the Lord comes to judgment, he will be attended " by myriads of his ſaints," or rather " holy " ones," μυριασιν αγιαις. And in both of theſe places, it is no leſs obvious that it cannot ſignify leſs than *ten thouſands* of theſe ſpirits; and if it be ſuppoſed to be taken in an *indefinite* acceptation, it muſt denote even more. Compare ſimilar expreſſions in a deſcription, at leaſt emblematic, of the univerſal judgment: Dan. vii. 9, 10. And in the laſt of theſe paſſages, conſidering the repreſentation which is there given of the numbers who crowded to witneſs

of this very gentleman, it is obvious that it cannot signify less than *many ten thousands* in the passage in question, for it includes, according to him, not merely the number of believers in the city of Jerusalem, but the number of believers from *the whole Jewish nation*. Certainly, considering the time during which the gospel had been preached, and the success which it had obtained in many countries before the period which is here mentioned, *many ten thousands* of Jews must have been comprehended among its followers. But allowing that the word μυριάδες here properly means, that there were many *ten thousands* of Jews at this time in that city, "they are "not affirmed," says Mr. Ewing, p. 32. "to be all "members of the church at Jerusalem; and very many "of them were most likely believing Jews, assembled "from various quarters at Jerusalem, at the day of "Pentecost. For the probability of this supposition "we may appeal to the haste made by Paul, if possible, "to be at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, and to the "increasing number of fellow-travellers who joined com-"pany with him on the road, as appears from chap. "xx. 16. and xxi. 16." On this however it may be remarked, that no argument can be adduced from *the number* of those who went up with Paul at this time to Jerusalem, to shew that they were travelling thither to observe this solemnity. It is not said, in the last of these texts, that those whom he met going up to Jerusalem were going thither with *that design*, or that *their number* was such as one would naturally expect, had there been a general convocation to the feast of Pentecost. All that is mentioned is simply this, "That there went up with

the miracles of Jesus, it seems to be equally manifest that it cannot mean less than its strict signification, for we may well suppose that more than one myriad of spectators would be collected, and that they might even amount to twenty or thirty thousand. See also Rev. v. 11.

" Paul and Luke from Cefarea, alſo *certain* of the diſciples " of Cefarea, and with them one Mnaſon of Cyprus, an " old diſciple." Had there been a general aſſemblage to this ſacred feſtival, would not the number of Jews, who went from Cefarea, have been repreſented as much greater? It has been queſtioned moreover, and upon very good grounds, as is obſerved by the venerable Weſtminſter Aſſembly, whether Paul arrived at Jeruſalem before the day of Pentecoſt: And even admitting that he was preſent, it by no means appears that by the many ten thouſands of believing Jews of whom James ſpeaks, are intended the whole number of believing Jews, as Mr. Ewing aſſerts, who had come up to this feaſt from the various quarters of the Gentile world. It was before evinced, that the Jews in general, who lived among the Gentiles, were neither bound nor accuſtomed to reſort to Jeruſalem from every part in the earth to obſerve this ſolemnity, which laſted for a ſingle day only, and which could not with propriety be kept by many of them, as their harveſt at this period was not yet begun. The number then of ſuch Jews, from other countries, muſt have been comparatively ſmall. In fine, whatever number of theſe Jews might have been preſent at the feaſt, they do not ſeem to be included among the myriads of Jews who were pointed out to Paul by the apoſtle James. The latter are *all* repreſented as ſtrangers to Paul, and as being *informed* ſimply by the teſtimony of others (ver. 21.), " that he taught *all* " *the Jews which were among the Gentiles* to forſake " Moſes"—on account of which it is declared that they were offended. As there were few places however in the Gentile world where Paul had not either before this preached, or ſent others to preach under his direction, it is obvious that thoſe myriads who were diſpleaſed with theſe unjuſt repreſentations of his doctrine, and had heard of it merely by the teſtimony of others, muſt have

been Jews chiefly, distinct from those who dwelt among the Gentiles. But if even in the little country of Judea there were *many myriads* of believing Jews, the greatest proportion of these must undoubtedly have been in Jerusalem, which had hitherto been the habitation of almost all the apostles, and where, as we already saw, more than twenty years before, the converts amounted to nine or ten thousand. Allowing however that only *three* of these myriads belonged to Jerusalem, it will make the number of Jews who were connected with that church, independently of converts who would be added to them from the Gentiles, no less than *thirty thousand*. And considering, as will be noticed under a following argument, the number of ministers, who for so long a space had laboured amongst them, it is probable that their proportion of these *many* ten thousands must have been considerably greater.

But if such was the number of members at Jerusalem, it is evident that they must have been divided into different congregations, each superintended by its respective pastors. No place could be found sufficiently large to contain such a multitude, with the rest of the hearers who would assemble along with them; no preacher could be heard by such an audience; and it cannot be conceived that so great a number could receive together, in the very same place, the sacrament of the supper. Eusebius informs us, in his Ecclesiastical History, book viii. chap. i. that the houses in which the Christians at first met were very small, and that it was in consequence only of the favour which, in process of time, was manifested to them by the Roman emperors and governors that they were enabled to erect more capacious buildings: "Ων "δη ἕνεκα μηδαμως ετι τοις παλαι οικοδομησασιν αρκουμενοι, "ευρειας εις πλατος ανα πασας τας πολεις εκθεμελιων, ανισων "εκκλησιας;" *i. e.* "The ancient buildings being by no "means sufficient to contain the people, they erected in

" every city larger churches." Accordingly the houſes in which the primitive Chriſtians were accuſtomed to meet, were *ſchools*, or *upper rooms*, or *private dwellings*. We hear of their aſſembling in an upper room, Acts i. 12. *&c.*; in the houſe of Mary, Acts xii. 12.; in the ſchool of Tyrannus, Acts xix. 9.; in an upper chamber at Troas, Acts xx. 8.; in the houſe of Aquila and Priſcilla, Rom. xvi. 5.; of Nymphas, Col. iv. 15.; and of Archippus, Philem. 2. But where could an upper room, or ſchool, or houſe, be found in Jeruſalem which was able to accommodate thirty thouſand individuals for all the purpoſes of religious worſhip? The only place ſufficiently large was the temple; but even in it, there does not appear to have been any ſingle apartment which could conveniently admit ſuch a multitude. The moſt ſpacious court in this building was that called Solomon's Porch. " Now the place," ſays Ayton, p. 226. " which went under this name, was not the mere en- " trance of the eaſt gate to the outer temple; but the " whole of the eaſt wall, which was built by Solomon, " at an extraordinary expence, and was in length 500 " cubits, or 250 yards.—It is further," adds he, " to " be conſidered, that the whole length of this wall " within, there were walks or cloiſters from each ſide " of the entry of the porch to the ends of the wall, that " were ſupported by a treble row of marble pillars, into " a double walk, which was in breadth 30 cubits, or 15 " yards. The innermoſt of theſe pillars was joined to " the wall, and this made the two walks to be divided " in the middle by a row of pillars. Now, the whole " of this breadth, from the wall on which the innermoſt " row of pillars ſtood, to the Beautiful Gate, together " with the length of the ſaid wall, which was 500 " cubits, was, according to Dr. Lightfoot, the learned " Mr. Selden (de Jure Nat. et Gen. lib. iii. cap. vi.), and " Mr. Lewis (Orig. Heb. lib. iii. cap. xiii.), denominat-

"ed Solomon's Porch." But it is obvious that this place could by no means accommodate ſo many thouſands of members, together with their children, and the numerous ſtrangers who would continually be attracted from curioſity to hear them. Beſides, how could a ſingle preacher be audible, in a court interſected by ſo many rows of pillars, to forty thouſand hearers? or how could thirty thouſand members meet together in ſuch a place for the purpoſes of government? Could each of theſe perſons make himſelf be heard by ſuch an aſſembly? could he diſtinctly hear the opinion and vote of every individual? and would not buſineſs be conducted with extreme tardineſs and difficulty where ſo many had to ſtate their ſentiments and vote *? But even granting all theſe ſuppoſi-

* Is it ſaid, that Ezra, after the captivity, read and expounded the law to the Jews, who amounted to a ſtill greater number, and was heard by them all? Neh. viii. 1.—5. I aſk, whether Independents can ſuppoſe that a ſingle individual could be heard by fifty or ſixty thouſand perſons? And is it ſtill affirmed, that this fact, though wonderful, ſeems to be aſſerted in this paſſage? It is replied, that it is not aſſerted nearly ſo ſtrongly as is done in Deut. xxxi. 30. that Moſes 'ſpake in the ears of *all the congre-*" *gation* of Iſrael the words of his ſong," at a time when their males only (ſee Numb. xxvi. 51. 62.) amounted to ſix hundred and twenty-four thouſand ſeven hundred and thirty, and when, with their wives and children, they made up probably almoſt two millions. But if Independents would not maintain that Moſes made himſelf audible at once to ſuch a multitude, how can they demonſtrate (ſince in the nature of things it is as certainly impoſſible) that Ezra was heard in an open ſtreet by fifty or ſixty thouſand, merely becauſe he is ſaid to have read the law to them when they were met together? And if Moſes, moreover, might be ſaid to ſpeak his ſong, as we are informed in Deut. xxxi. 30. compared with ver. 28. in the ears of all the congregation of Iſrael, when he ſpake only in the ears of their elders and officers, who again were to communicate what he ſaid to the people, might not ſomething like this be done by Ezra? Or might he not only read and explain it to a part, while they explained it to others,

tions to be not only poſſible but probable, it muſt ſtill be proved that the Chriſtians at pleaſure enjoyed the temple for theſe religious purpoſes. So far however is this fact from being clear, that, though extremely important, it is paſſed over in ſilence, a circumſtance which probably would not have taken place had they poſſeſſed that privilege. Nay, though at firſt, before the blood of any Chriſtians was ſhed, the apoſtles ventured occaſionally to preach in the temple, even after they had been beaten for it by the high prieſts, we do not find that they afterwards enjoyed ſuch a liberty; and neither at firſt, nor afterwards, did they dare to diſpenſe in it the ſacrament of the ſupper, or convene, for the deliberations of government, the members who belonged to their church. It is manifeſt that liberty would not be granted to them for the latter, either by the prieſts or the people, who would be alarmed at the idea of their meeting alone, in a place ſo ſacred, for purpoſes unknown to them; and it is no leſs obvious that they would not attempt to adminiſter in it the former. If Paul ſo highly diſpleaſed even the common people (Acts xxi.), though they favoured and magnified the apoſtles, that they endeavoured to kill him, for bringing, as they ſuppoſed, certain Greeks into the temple, and polluting the holy place, would it not have been much more dangerous had they dared to celebrate in it a *new ſacrament*, which vied with, and far ſurpaſſed in point of frequency, according to Independents, the moſt ſolemn ſacrament of the ancient economy *? Accordingly, while the apoſtles are ſaid to have

eſpecially as we are told (Neh. viii. 7, 8.) that "*thirteen others* "alſo, beſides the Levites, read to the people, at that time, in "the book of the law of God diſtinctly, and gave the ſenſe, and "cauſed them to underſtand the reading?"

* That it is probable that the ſupper was more frequently diſpenſed than the ſacrament of circumciſion is readily conceded, but *how much more* frequently, notwithſtanding all that is aſſerted by

been imprisoned by the high-priests, because they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead (Acts iv. 2.), we do not hear that they were censured for meeting the Christians by themselves

Independents, scripture does not appear expressly to say. In 1 Cor. xi. 25. we are told, that as often as Christians drink the sacramental cup, they should do it in remembrance of Christ; and in ver. 26. that *as often* as they eat that bread, or drank that cup, they shewed forth the Lord's death till he came; but how often they should do so, it does not specify. In Acts ii. 42. it is said, that the converts who believed on the day of Pentecost, "continued stedfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and "in breaking of bread, and in prayer." But all that is here recorded, is merely that they persevered in the belief of the doctrines, and in the observance of all the ordinances of Christianity, while, at the same time, it is evident that there is not the smallest hint *how often* the supper, or any other ordinance, was to be observed. In Acts ii. 46. we are informed, that these Christians, continuing *daily* with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, or, as others render it, in a house, did participate their food, or the food, with gladness and singleness of heart. But neither does this seem to be sufficiently explicit; for in the 1st place, It is not certain that it is the breaking of *sacramental* bread, and not their feasts of love, which is intended. And 2dly, If this passage prove any thing upon the subject, it proves too much. It will shew that we should eat the supper, not merely, as Independents maintain, every Sabbath, but *daily*. In Acts xx. 6, 7. it is said, that when Paul and his companions had tarried seven days at Troas, on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached to them. But it is not here declared, that on *every first day of the week*, when the disciples came together, they eat sacramental bread, but only that on *that particular first day* of the week they had done so. If some ministers, from a distance, arriving in Edinburgh on the Monday before the sacrament of the supper was dispensed, should remain till the first day of the following week, and then assist at the dispensation of the sacrament, would that circumstance, if narrated by any historian, prove that the supper was observed every Sabbath in all the churches of Edinburgh? Or if Independents refer to the writings of the fathers in support of this practice, it may

in the temple, for the affairs of government, or for dispensing, in that place, the sacrament of the supper. And it is remarkable, that at the very time that it is said that the first Christians continued in the temple to receive instruction, it is added (Acts ii. 46.), "that they brake "bread from house to house," or in different houses;

be observed, 1st, That many improprieties, as was before shewn, were admitted even by the primitive church; and that we must try this, as well as all their practices, by the scriptures, and see whether it is enjoined or warranted by them. Upon examining the scriptures however, we perceive that it is not explicitly announced how often this ordinance should be observed in the church; and consequently, though many of the primitive churches eat the supper every Sabbath, we no more offend against the word of God than they, if we do not eat it every first day of the week. And 2dly, This argument proves too much. Cyprian, A. D. 250. informs us, in his Treatise on the Lord's Prayer, that *daily communions* were the common practice at that time; and Fortunatus, who lived at the same period, adduces the fourth petition of that prayer as an argument for communicating *every* day. Basil, in the fourth century, recommends *daily communion*; and says, that it was the practice of the church of Cesarea where he was, to celebrate the sacrament *four times* a-week, *viz.* on Sabbath, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday (Basil. Epist. 289.)—Ambrose seems to intimate that *daily communions* were in use at Milan (De Sacram. lib. v. cap. iv. p. 449.)—Jerome tells us, that they were kept up, in his time, in the churches of Spain, and at Rome (Epist. lii. ad Lucin.)—And Augustine, about the year 410 (Epist. cxviii. ad Januar.), that the eucharist was received by *some daily*. If Independents then, when scripture is silent, wish us to take the example of the primitive church as our guide, and from this contend that we should eat the supper every Sabbath, why do not they themselves adopt this example in its full extent, and communicate *daily*, or at least on Sabbath, and Wednesday, and Friday, and Saturday? By these observations it is not intended however to say, whether weekly communion is lawful or unlawful, but only to shew, that as scripture is silent as to the precise degree of frequency, they are not entitled to declaim with that severity which they often discover against others who cannot, so often as they, observe that ordinance.

i. e. as many interpreters explain it, and as the Syriac tranſlates it, they kept the euchariſt, or brake ſacramental bread *. But if no ſingle perſon could be audible, as an inſtructor, to thirty or forty thouſand hearers at once; if they could not meet together with eaſe and ſatisfaction for the purpoſes of government; if no ſingle place could be found to accommodate ſuch a multitude, when, as at that early period, according to Euſebius, the houſes for worſhip were extremely ſmall; if even in the temple there was no apartment which could contain ſuch a number; and, whatever its ſize, if it could not be obtained by them, when they choſe to reſort to it, for the private meetings of their members for government, or even for the public celebration of the ſupper; is it not undeniable that there muſt have been a variety of congregations in the city of Jeruſalem, furniſhed with diſtinct and ſeparate paſtors, and meeting in ſeparate and appropriate churches.

LETTER XVI.

SIR,

THAT there muſt have been a plurality of congregations in the city of Jeruſalem, I have endeavoured to ſhew in the preceding Letter, from the number of believers who reſided in that city. This rendered it totally impoſſible for them all to convene in a ſingle place for any of the purpoſes of religious fellowſhip. And this, as was remarked, was naturally to be expected, for Jeſus having aſcended to the right hand of his Father, and ſhed down his Spirit in more rich abundance on the ſouls

* On this circumſtance however, as was before ſtated, no ſtreſs is laid, as it is not certain that it is the breaking of ſacramental bread which is here intended.

of men than had ever formerly been witneſſed by the world, the delightful period had now arrived, when his ſpiritual offspring were to be more in number than the drops of dew, "from the womb of the morning:" Pſal. cx. 3.

The ſame concluſion may be argued from *the number of miniſters, who, for a very conſiderable time, were continually employed in labouring in that city.* Among theſe were the twelve apoſtles, and, as moſt expoſitors apprehend, the ſeventy diſciples, together with many prophets (Acts xi. 27, 28.), and many elders (ver. 30.). The firſt claſs of theſe miniſters moreover, and conſequently we muſt ſuppoſe the reſt of them, were ſo engaged in preaching, that they were obliged to inſtitute an order of miniſters to ſerve tables, that they might themſelves be enabled, along with their fellow-miniſters, to give themſelves *continually* to prayer and the *miniſtry of the word:* Acts vi. But if there was only one congregation of believers where each of theſe teachers miniſtered in his turn, how extremely unaccountable muſt this repreſentation appear? But *one* congregation, and above *a hundred* miniſters, ſo *unceaſingly* employed in preaching the word, that they could not find leiſure to diſtribute among the poor the money which had been collected for them! It may be ſaid indeed, that while one of them preached to this congregation, the reſt were itinerating through different parts of the city. But ſtill it appears very extraordinary, that while only two or three were neceſſary for the inſtruction of this particular congregation, ſo many teachers remained in Jeruſalem even for the purpoſe of itinerating, while they were much more needed in many other places, as well as the ſurrounding country. Can it be believed, if there had been only one congregation in that city, that ſo many miniſters would have reſided in it ſtatedly for almoſt *thirty* years, while the reſt of the world was ſo deſtitute

of the means of religious inſtruction * ? Such a ſuppoſition ſeems by no means to be probable. The only way then in which we can account for this fact appears to be this, that there was ſuch a number of congregations in Jeruſalem as furniſhed ſufficient employment for all of them.

In the third place, The *diverſity of languages* ſpoken by theſe Chriſtians at Jeruſalem, clearly evinces that there muſt have been a correſponding diverſity of congregations in that city.

We are told, Acts ii. that among thoſe who were converted on the day of Pentecoſt, and who heard the apoſtles ſpeak, each *in their own language*, were devout men, from Parthia, Media, Elam, Meſopotamia, Cappadocia, Pontus, Aſia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, and the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and alſo from Rome, Crete, and Arabia. We are informed alſo, Acts vi. of a murmuring againſt the Hebrews, or Jews who ſpake the Syriac tongue, by the Grecians, or Jews who, having come from places where the Greek language prevailed, ſpake that language. Now admitting even that ſome of theſe might not remain at Jeruſalem, this diverſity of languages would ſtill exiſt among thoſe who continued, and render it equally neceſſary, as on the day of Pentecoſt, that the goſpel ſhould be preached to them by various miniſters, and in different congregations, in their native tongues. It may be ſaid indeed, that they might underſtand the Syriac, as the Jews at preſent, though they uſe the vernacular tongues of the various countries where they are ſcattered, ſtill have their religious ſervices performed in the Hebrew language. It is an indiſputable fact however, that the Jews are in general ignorant of the Hebrew; and the performance of their religion in

* The only inſtances recorded in ſcripture of occaſional viſits to other places by any of theſe miniſters (Barnabas excepted), are extremely few, and appear to have been but temporary.

that language no more proves that they underſtand it, than the uſe of the Latin in the Romiſh church proves that the common people are acquainted with *it*. Beſides, the excluſive uſe of the Septuagint tranſlation by the Jews for near 300 years both before and after Chriſt, and the writing of the New Teſtament in Greek (as Lardner ſhews to have been the caſe), proves beyond queſtion that the Syriac, at this period, was underſtood neither by the foreign Jews nor by Gentile proſelytes *. So little indeed was it known, that even Philo tranſlates the moſt common Syriac word on the authority of others. And it will be obvious to any one who examines with attention the Targums, or Talmuds, that ſo ſtriking a difference ſubſiſts between them, even in point of language, as ſhews that the Syriac, at that period, could neither have been generally nor uniformly underſtood by the Jewiſh nation. Let any one, in ſhort, conſider whether it is probable that the native Jews of Rome, and Crete, and Pontus, *&c.* with the proſelytes from theſe countries, could be ſo well acquainted with the language of Judea, as to be able to receive in it religious inſtruction with the ſame pleaſure and advantage as in their original tongues?—Or that the apoſtles, who were enriched with the gift of tongues for almoſt thirty years, did not exerciſe this invaluable endowment, though it was abſolutely requiſite for diſſeminating the goſpel among ſtrangers and foreigners, or when at leaſt it muſt have been much more conducive to their edification to have heard the diſcourſes of theſe miniſters of Chriſt in

* It was only after the Targums, or the Tranſlations, and the Talmuds, or the Expoſitions, of the ancient Scriptures in the Syriac Language had been finiſhed, that the Greek verſions of the Seventy, and of Aquila the Jew, ceaſed to be uſed by the Jewiſh nation. And the diſcontinuance of them was produced only by the decrees of their doctors, who forbad the uſe of them, leſt their countrymen ſhould be led by them to embrace Chriſtianity.

their native languages than in one which was leſs familiar?

Is it objected, that the various Jews mentioned by Luke (Acts ii.), are repreſented as having underſtood the apology of Peter on the day of Pentecoſt (ver. 14.), though he ſpake to them all in the Syriac tongue. It is anſwered, that before this obſervation can have force, it muſt be demonſtrated that Peter ſpake to all of them *at once* in *the ſame language*, and not to each of them in order, in their reſpective languages, as it is plain was done before this by the apoſtles at large (ver. 5. to 11.*); or, on the other hand, that he was the only apoſtle who addreſſed theſe Jews at this particular time. Neither of theſe, we apprehend, can be evinced. Peter alone, indeed, is particularized, but this does not prove that other apoſtles alſo did not addreſs them. The ſame apoſtle is repreſented in the following chapter, from ver. 12. as the only perſon who ſpake to the Jews on another occaſion, and his ſpeech only is related; yet we are told in chap. iv. 1. that John alſo ſpake to them.

* In ver. 5. we are told, that there were dwelling at Jeruſalem, Jews, devout men, from *every nation* under heaven; and in ver. 6. that each of theſe heard the apoſtles ſpeak in their own languages. Of theſe languages fifteen are mentioned: and if there were Jews, as is here ſaid, dwelling at Jeruſalem, from *every nation* under heaven, it is probable that the languages which were ſpoken by the apoſtles on this occaſion muſt have been much more numerous. But if there were either fifteen or twenty companies of Jews who were all addreſſed by the apoſtles in different languages, it muſt have been at different times, for there were but twelve of theſe miniſters, and it was impoſſible for any of them to ſpeak to more than one company at once. If the apoſtles however, immediately before this apology of Peter, ſpoke to a part of theſe companies at one time, and to another at another, might not the ſame thing alſo be done by him when he delivered his apology, upon the ſuppoſition that, at that time, he alone ſpake to them in the name of the apoſtles?

Beſides, when Peter preached on the day of Pentecoſt, the *eleven* are ſaid to have ſtood up with him; and it appears much more natural to ſuppoſe that they roſe like him to addreſs the audience, as they had done before (ver. 6, 7, 8.), in their native tongues, than that they were altogether ſilent. Again, it is obſerved (ver. 37.), that when the multitude were aroufed to a feeling of their guilt by the truths which they heard, they came not only to Peter, but to the reſt of the apoſtles, and aſked what they ſhould do? which ſeems to ſuggeſt that they had heard theſe truths from them as well as from Peter. In fine, after they had cordially embraced the goſpel, it is ſaid, that they ſteadily adhered to the profeſſion of it; and the language in which it is expreſſed (ver. 42.) is this, That they continued in the doctrine *of the apoſtles*, or that which they had heard from them upon this important occaſion. But if Peter ſpake to theſe companies ſeparately, or if the reſt of the apoſtles, as well as Peter, addreſſed them by themſelves in different diviſions, it might be, as on the preceding part of this very day, in their reſpective languages: and no objection can be urged, from what is ſaid in this place by the ſacred hiſtorian, againſt the argument adduced, from the diverſity of languages which originally exiſted among the believers in Jeruſalem, for a diverſity of congregations in that Chriſtian church.

Whether then we conſider the number of members, or the number of miniſters, or the diverſity of languages in the church of Jeruſalem, we have abundant evidence that it comprehended different congregations, and that they could not all conveniently aſſemble for worſhip in one place.

Mr. Ewing however informs us, that neither the number of the diſciples at Jeruſalem, nor any of theſe circumſtances, prevented them uſually from meeting in one place; and of this he apprehends that he has direct

evidence, for " where their numbers are mentioned, " their meeting in one place is alſo mentioned." In proof of this he refers us to Acts ii. 41.—47. where we are told, that " all who believed were together, and had " all things in common." But though it were granted that the church *at this time*, when it was comparatively *ſmall*, met in one aſſembly, it would not follow that it could meet in one place when it was much larger. Beſides, all that is mentioned in this paſſage is, that, from the love which ſubſiſted among theſe primitive converts, they were frequently together, and cultivated eagerly each other's ſociety. But to this it was not neceſſary that they ſhould ſtatedly meet in one great aſſembly *. And though we are told moreover, in this and other places, that they aſſembled in the temple, it cannot be proved from this fact, that they convened in one congregation even to hear the word, for, as was before obſerved, the temple contained a variety of places, each of which could conveniently accommodate a congregation †.

Still, however, Mr. Ewing contends that his aſſertion is confirmed by Acts v. 12, 13. where it is ſaid, that " by the hands of the apoſtles were many ſigns and won- " ders wrought among the people; (and they were all

* Επι το αυτο, which is rendered " together," in the preſent paſſage, according to Lightfoot, is uſed by the Seventy to ſignify an aſſembly, ſometimes in the ſame body, Judges vi. 33.—ſometimes ſimply in the ſame ſtate, Jer. vi. 12.—and ſometimes engaged merely in the ſame action, or exerciſe, though in different places, 2 Sam. ii. 13. Pſal. xxxiv. 3. xlix. 2. &c. See alſo Pſal. ii. 2.

† " The High Church of Glaſgow," ſays Ayton, p. 220. " hath " three diſtinct congregations in it, and there is as much room " beſides, as might contain one or two more; but their being in " that huge building all at one time, will no more denominate " them one ſingle aſſembly for public worſhip, meeting in the " ſame individual place, under the inſtruction of one paſtor, than " if they were at ſome miles diſtance."

" with one accord in Solomon's Porch: and of the reſt " durſt no man join himſelf unto them: but the people " magnified them.") But before any argument from this can be concluſive, he muſt prove that by *the all* who were in Solomon's Porch, are intended, not the apoſtles alone, as diſtinguiſhed from the people, but the whole body of Chriſtian converts. That it was the apoſtles alone, is probable from the connection of the paſſage. The ſame fear which fell upon the multitude in general, and which for a time kept them at a diſtance from the apoſtles, is aſſerted, in the 11th verſe, to have fallen equally upon *the whole church*, and, we may naturally ſuppoſe, would produce upon them a ſimilar effect. But *if the reſt of the church*, as well as the multitude, durſt not for a time join themſelves to the apoſtles, is it not obvious that it muſt have been the apoſtles alone who are ſaid to have been *all* in Solomon's Porch? Beſides, they only are ſpoken of in the immediately preceding clauſe, when it is mentioned that many ſigns and wonders were done by them among the people; and conſequently it is moſt natural to ſuppoſe that *the all* who are ſpecified in the very next words, and who are ſaid to have been in Solomon's Porch, muſt have been the very ſame perſons. And that the apoſtles might go up to Solomon's Porch without the people, ſeems credible, not only from what has been already ſtated, but from what is recorded, in a foregoing chapter, of Peter and John, who are repreſented as going up alone to the temple. Nay, though we ſhould allow that the whole of the diſciples, as well as the apoſtles, were in Solomon's Porch, yet if we conſider, as has been remarked, that it was fitted to accommodate a number of congregations, it muſt be evident to all, that it does not neceſſarily follow that they were all collected into one aſſembly. Glaſs, and other Independents, have aſſerted, that no more believers reſided in Jeruſalem than what ſtatedly met in one place, be-

cauſe the apoſtles are repreſented, at the election of the deacons (Acts vi.), as calling the multitude, and enjoining them to elect theſe officers. But it might be only the heads of them who in reality were ſummoned, if, as we have attempted to ſhew, the whole were too numerous to meet in one place. Thus, as was formerly noticed, Moſes is often ſaid to have called all Iſrael, and to have ſpoken *in the ears* of all the congregation whatſoever the Lord enjoined him, while, as was formerly noticed, he aſſembled and addreſſed the elders or office-bearers only. Let it be admitted however that the multitude of believers at large were called, it is not ſaid, either that all of the apoſtles, or all of the diſciples were in one place, and from any thing that is here mentioned, they might convene in a number of ſeparate aſſemblies. Were we to be told, for inſtance, that the miniſters of Glaſgow called the multitude of the members, and aſked them to elect a General Seſſion, would it not immediately occur to us, from what we know of the congregations in Glaſgow, that the members would not all meet in one place, but in their different churches, and with their reſpective office-bearers? And ſuppoſe it to be demonſtrated from *other* paſſages, as we have already attempted, that the Chriſtians in Jeruſalem, like the members in Glaſgow, were far too numerous to aſſemble conveniently in the ſame place, though this language be uſed, is it not equally plain that they would meet in different aſſemblies? Nothing then can be certainly deduced from the paſſage before us, as to the actual number of congregations in Jeruſalem *.

It is ſaid further, that all the deacons were brought to the apoſtles, and ordained by them in one place. There

* "Let Independents but conſider," ſay the Weſtminſter Divines, "how the city of *London* chooſe their common-council, and "preſent them to the court of aldermen:" p. 21.

is a material difference however between election and ordination, and though the latter might be performed in one assembly, the former might be done by the members of the church in their different congregations.

Is it contended once more, that the church at Jerusalem was a single congregation, because the members are represented (Acts xv.) as all assembled at the decision on the reference from the church of Antioch? It is replied, that the whole of the members are not said to have convened with the apostles on that occasion; but all that is mentioned is simply this, that such of the disciples as could attend, and were so disposed, were allowed to be hearers of that interesting discussion. What this number was, is not specified. Nay, it might perhaps be alleged with considerable plausibility, that it is not evident, from the sacred history, that any of the private members of the church were present. The term *brethren*, we know, by which it is supposed by Independents that they are here distinguished, is frequently given to ministers as such, and to them alone. It is the name by which the ministers of the church of Ephesus are characterized by Paul (Acts xx. 32.), whom he had before denominated (ver. 17. and 28.) elders and overseers—by which he describes other ministers, Philip. i. 14. whom he speaks of in that passage as preaching the word—and which he often bestows upon the evangelists, Titus, and Timothy, and others, 2 Cor. ii. 13. viii. 18. 23. 1 Thess. iii. 2. *&c.* Should it be asserted then, that by the brethren here specified, besides the apostles and elders, may be intended the evangelists and prophets in the city of Jerusalem, as well as any other ministers who might be then in that place, it might be difficult to disprove it. Nor can the contrary be established from the term multitude, or πληθος (ver. 12.), which is applied to that assembly, for we see the same name given (chap. xxiii. 7. compared with chap. xxii. 30.) to the Jewish sanhedrin, a

court of rulers only, and which probably was not more numerous than this Chriſtian council. In chap. i. 15. a ſimilar name is given to an aſſembly conſiſting only of a hundred and twenty perſons: "And the number (οχλος) "of the names," ſays Luke, or, as the ſame word is more literally tranſlated (Luke xii. 1. &c.), "*the multitude* "of the names, was about an hundred and twenty." The meaning therefore of the phraſe (Acts xv. 22.), "It pleaſed the apoſtles and elders, with the whole "church," or, as the word very frequently ſignifies, rather "the whole aſſembly (εκκλησια)," may be, that the deciſion which was given was perfectly unanimous, or that what was propoſed obtained the complete concurrence of the apoſtles and elders, and other miniſters, who were members of this aſſembly. And that the term εκκλησια, here rendered church, but which more properly ſhould be tranſlated aſſembly, denotes often an aſſembly of rulers only, was endeavoured, you know, to be proved before, not only from the authority of Demoſthenes, but of the Septuagint. Beſides, that it is ſo to be interpreted here ſeems evident from this, that as *the reference was made only* to the apoſtles and ſtated paſtors at Jeruſalem, as well as the prophets and evangeliſts, who alſo were elders, it appears neceſſary, upon every principle of fair explication, to underſtand "by the "whole of the reſt of the aſſembly, or εκκλησια" (ver. 22.), beſides the apoſtles and ordinary elders, who delivered this deciſion, the other miniſters alone, ſince to miniſters alone the affair was ſubmitted. And it deſerves to be remarked, that the only individuals of the brethren, or as it is expreſſed, ver. 22. the reſt of the aſſembly, who are here mentioned, and are ſaid to have been leading men among them (ηγουμενοι), are Judas and Silas, who are affirmed, in ver. 32. to have been prophets. But if by the phraſes, *the whole of the reſt of the aſſembly*, and *the brethren*, who are here ſpoken of, with the apoſtles

and elders, are to be underſtood, not the members of the church at Jeruſalem, but only the other miniſters who compoſed that aſſembly, no argument can be adduced, from what is here ſaid, to prove that, at this period, no more Chriſtian members could be found at Jeruſalem than could conveniently meet in one place *.

The grand argument advanced by Mr. Ewing in common with his predeceſſors, is founded upon Acts xxi. 22. "After all, however," (ſays he, p. 32. ſpeaking of the many ten thouſands of Jews who were pointed out to Paul as profeſſing the goſpel) "no inference is drawn from "the many myriads of believers, that it would be im- "poſſible for them to meet in one place †. We have an "inference of a very different kind. What is it there- "fore? The multitude (not the paſtors and a few dele- "gates from the reſt, but the multitude) muſt needs "come together." But before this reaſoning can be admitted to be concluſive, it muſt be proved by Mr. Ewing, that, at that period, there was a univerſal con-

* Is it ſaid with Glaſs, that this interpretation would attach to the term *church*, or rather, as the word ſignifies, *aſſembly*, a different meaning in ver. 22. from that which it has in ver. 3, 4.? It is anſwered, that this is admitted, but reaſons have been aſſigned above for aſcribing to it different acceptations in theſe verſes. In ver. 22. it certainly can only denote the whole of that aſſembly, or εκκλησια, who were referred to; while, in the other verſes, it may include alſo the common members at Jeruſalem. The ſame remark too will hold as to the different acceptations of the term *brethren*, in ver. 22.; and certainly it will be allowed that when ſatisfactory reaſons ſeem evidently to require it, different meanings may be attached to a word in the ſame chapter, and even in the ſame verſe.

† Such an inference is never expreſsly ſtated, but ſuch an inference is as clearly warranted by the facts which are recorded, as that which is drawn by our Saviour (Matth. xii.) from what is ſaid in the Old Teſtament, of David's eating the ſhew-bread when he was hungry, though ſuch an inference is not even hinted in the Book of Samuel.

courſe of the Chriſtian Jews from *every quarter* to Jeruſalem at the feaſt of Pentecoſt, and that it was poſſible for the multitude who would then convene to aſſemble in one place. The goſpel had been preached, as was formerly obſerved, for almoſt thirty years, not only in Jeruſalem and Judea, but in Rome, Epheſus, Corinth, Philippi, and many other places, with wonderful ſucceſs. In Jeruſalem and Judea alone, during that ſpace, many thouſands were converted, and who, together with their children, who muſt now have arrived at the years of maturity, would undoubtedly form a very great aſſembly. Now, if to theſe were added as many believing Jews as Independents ſay came up from Rome, Epheſus, Corinth, and all the extenſive regions where the goſpel had been preached, the number of thoſe who would be collected on this occaſion could not be leſs than fifty or ſixty thouſand. But how could ſuch a multitude meet together, in the very ſame building, for worſhip, or government, or the participation of the ſupper? Was there any houſe which could have contained ſuch a multitude? or, if ſuch a houſe could be found, was there a ſingle individual who could be heard by them? Beſides, admitting all theſe, it was impoſſible that they ſhould convene in the very ſame aſſembly for the purpoſes of government. The greater part of theſe myriads, by the confeſſion of Mr. Ewing and other Independents, were not members of the church of Jeruſalem, and conſequently could not aſſemble with them for the ends of government, for if they were admitted to vote or judge at all, they would, on account of their number, have had a much greater ſhare in the adminiſtration than the members at Jeruſalem had. Would not this power, according to the Independent plan, have been completely ſubverſive of the rights and privileges of the Chriſtians at Jeruſalem, for is it not one of their firſt principles, as has repeatedly been noticed, that the members of one

congregation are not to be governed by the decisions of the members of any other congregation under heaven? And is it not evident that whatever was the end for which, as James declares in the words referred to (ver. 22.), the Jews would come together, when they heard that Paul was arrived, it could not be to take cognizance of the conduct of Paul in a *judicial capacity*. Paul was not a member of the church at Jerusalem, or of any church around, and, of course, even on the principles of Independents, neither the church at Jerusalem, nor any of the Jews who were there, had a right to meet as an ecclesiastical court, and decide upon his conduct. The truth seems to be, that James does not refer to any regular meeting of the church which was to take place, but to a tumultuous concourse, such as actually ensued, as soon as it was announced that Paul was at Jerusalem *. But it is manifest that the mere assertion that there would be a concourse of the Jews, however great, as soon as it was reported that Paul was at Jerusalem, will never demonstrate that the whole of the stated members in that city, as well as the many thousands from every other quarter, could meet in one place, either for instruction, or communion, or the exercise of government. Neither then, from this, nor any other passage, does it appear that the whole of the Christians, residing in Jerusalem, could statedly assemble in the very same place. When we therefore reflect on the circumstances already mentioned, it seems necessarily to follow, agreeably to our first general observation, that there must have been a diversity of congregations in Jerusalem, each of which had its respective pastors, and its respective place for stated convention.

* In proof of this, among other things, it is not said that a meeting of the members would be called by the apostles, or any of the rulers of the church, but simply, upon their hearing of his arrival, they would of themselves come together.

But, *in the ſecond place*, if there was a number of congregations in this city, were they perfectly independent of each other in point of government, and did each of them conſtitute a completely diſtinct and diſconnected ſociety? No; for while they formed ſeparate congregations, each of which had its particular paſtors and ſtated ordinances, they were ſtill ſo united, in point of government, as to be uniformly deſcribed but as *one church*. Never do we hear of the *churches* in Jeruſalem, but *nine* times of the *church*, and twice, according to ſome, of *the whole church*, which was eſtabliſhed in that city. But this is certainly inconſiſtent with the ſuppoſition, that each of theſe congregations conſtituted a ſeparate and independent church, and directly contradicts one of your favourite aſſertions, that the term *church*, in ſcripture, is never applied but to a ſingle congregation, who could meet conveniently in the ſame place. Beſides, when we examine the Hiſtory of the Acts, we ſee that, in addition to the particular office-bearers who ſuperintended theſe congregations, they had a general court, compoſed of the apoſtles and elders of the whole, who ſeem conſtantly to have adminiſtered their general concerns, as well as, perhaps, reviewed the deciſions of ſubordinate courts. This court ordained the deacons (Acts vi.); received and diſtributed the contributions (Acts xi. 30.) which were ſent, for the aſſiſtance of the poor at Jeruſalem, by the brethren at Antioch; and decided (Acts xv.) upon a reference which was made to them from the church at Antioch. And indeed, if they determined in an authoritative manner as to a reference which was made to them by another church at ſo great a diſtance, we may well believe that while they governed ſeparately their different congregations in the city of Jeruſalem, they met likewiſe occaſionally as a general council, to judge in any appeals or references which were preſented from theſe particular congregations.

Again, are we not told, Acts xxi. 18. that when the apoſtle Paul had arrived at Jeruſalem, he went in unto James; and all *the elders* were preſent? And does not this aſſembly of elders not only ſuggeſt to Paul the manner in which he ſhould act on a particular occaſion, but affirm, that they had formerly *concluded*, or *determined* (κεκριϰειμεν), reſpecting the power of the ceremonial law? But does not this inſinuate that there were meetings not only of the elders of each of the congregations to regulate the affairs of theſe particular congregations, but meetings alſo of the elders of the different congregations in that city, in a judicial capacity, to decide in matters of more general importance? And if they met in common with miniſters from Antioch, to decide in an appeal which was made to them by that church, much more would they meet with the miniſters of any particular congregation in Jeruſalem, to determine as to any appeal which might be made to them from that church. When we reflect then upon theſe facts, which have been attempted to be proved—that there was a number of congregations in the city of Jeruſalem, each of which had its reſpective paſtors, and its particular place for ſtated convention—and that, though thus diſtinct, and poſſeſſing their different elders and overſeers, they were yet ſo connected, in point of government, as to conſtitute only *one church*—and when we ſee the elders of theſe congregations aſſembling together in one common court, for deciding upon appeals from diſtant congregations—is it not obvious that the ſcheme of Independency, which aſſerts that there is not a higher court under heaven than the elderſhip or rulers of a particular congregation, and that one congregation, with its overſeers, cannot be ſubjected to the review of the elders of a greater number of congregations, is completely repugnant to the pattern which is left us in this primitive church, and the explicit teſtimony of the word of God?

Is it affirmed, as usual, that these assertions, as to the number of congregations in Jerusalem, cannot be just, because, as has been now remarked, they are represented in scripture but as *one church*, whereas, had there been different congregations, they would have been expressly pointed out as different churches? It is replied, that we are sufficiently instructed, by the number of believers who resided in Jerusalem, by the variety of their ministers, and the diversity of languages, that there must have been a number of congregations in that city. To allege therefore, notwithstanding, that they must have been but one congregation, because they are described in scripture as but one church, would be no less unfair and inconsistent than to affirm, that, because all the various believers in the world are also denominated *one church* (Matth. xvi. 18.), and *one flock* (John x. 16. 1 Peter v. 3. *&c.*), there is but one congregation in the world.

The whole nation of Israel moreover, as has been remarked, when it included almost two millions of persons, is pointed out to us but as *one church* (Acts vii. 38.), and we never hear that at any period, during the ancient dispensation, they comprehended more churches. But yet we know that even from the earliest times, when they met, to be taught by the priests and the Levites, it must have been in a number of distinct and separate congregations; and, agreeably to this, we are informed (Psal. lxxiv.) of many synagogues which had been built for this purpose in the land of Judea. Why then might not the believers in Jerusalem, and why may not the believers in any city or country, though meeting in various and separate societies, be pointed out likewise as but one church?

Is it asserted, as was done by the ancient Independents, that though it could be proved that there was a number of congregations in Jerusalem, and that these congregations were governed by a common court consisting of the

apoſtles, who were entitled to ſuperintend all the churches in the world, no argument can be adduced from it, for the right of ordinary inferior miniſters, from various congregations, to aſſemble as a Preſbytery, and review the deciſions of the elders or rulers of a particular congregation? It is replied, that the apoſtles are pointed out in ſcripture not only as extraordinary miniſters, but in the ordinary character of elders or rulers: 1 Peter v. 1. To affirm therefore with Independents, that it was an extraordinary act, becauſe it was done by apoſtles, is to beg the queſtion; nay, if the ſame principle were applied to their conduct in other inſtances, it would be attended with conſequences the moſt deſtructive to Independency. Upon the ſame grounds it would follow, that ſince *the apoſtles* are ſaid to have preached, to have diſpenſed the ſacraments, and to have ordained deacons, theſe acts were extraordinary, and ought not now to be performed by ordinary miniſters, whether Independent or Preſbyterian. But if the mere circumſtance of its being related in ſcripture, that *the apoſtles* met as a court of review, and ſuperintended the affairs of all the churches in Jeruſalem, will not demonſtrate that their conduct, in this inſtance, is to be viewed as extraordinary, it becomes neceſſary to aſcertain by other conſiderations whether it was ſo. And when we attend to theſe conſiderations, we find reaſon to conclude that it was not extraordinary, for both the nature of the thing, and the admiſſion of ordinary teaching elders to ſit with them in this court and to exerciſe along with them the ſame authority, clearly point out to us an oppoſite deduction. The laſt of theſe privileges could never have been granted to them, had the conduct of the apoſtles in this inſtance been extraordinary, and conſequently not intended to be imitated at preſent by ordinary miniſters. Ordinary miniſters were certainly then as little entitled, had this been an extraordinary power, to claim a ſhare of it, as ordinary miniſters in the pre-

ſent day. Nor were they allowed merely to expreſs their acquieſcence in what was ſaid or determined by the apoſtles (as Silvanus and others, whoſe names are recorded in the Apoſtolic Epiſtles, were), but they poſſeſſed an equality of power; for the deciſions which were delivered in this eccleſiaſtical court are called expreſsly, "the decrees of the elders," as well as of the apoſtles. It is obvious then, that the apoſtles did not act in theſe courts of review as extraordinary miniſters; and, by admitting into that council, which governed the affairs of all the congregations in Jeruſalem, ordinary office-bearers, we are warranted to ſay, that the ordinary elders of a number of congregations are now entitled to meet as a Preſbytery, and examine the deciſions of any particular elderſhip, or determine in matters which relate to the intereſts of all theſe congregations.

Or, is it objected, as is done by Glaſs, that it cannot be proved that there were ſtated elders in each of the congregations in the city of Jeruſalem who governed theſe congregations, and who, when united as a court, regulated the affairs which reſpected them all? It is a ſufficient anſwer, that it cannot be proved *that there was not* in each of them a fixed and ſtated elderſhip who ſuperintended it; and it is moſt probable, from the conſtitution of other congregations, as well as from what is elſewhere ſaid of Paul and Barnabas (Acts xiv. 23. "that "they ordained elders in every church," or, as Independents would explain it, in every congregation), that there were ſuch office-bearers. At any rate, and this is the point at preſent in debate, it ſeems evident that each of theſe congregations was not independent of the controul of the overſeers of others in point of government, but that there was a court correſponding to what we ſhould denominate a Preſbytery, compoſed of the elders of the different congregations, who exerciſed an authoritative power over each, as well as decided in matters of

general importance. The former, though probable from every thing that is ſaid of a Chriſtian congregation in the New Teſtament, is a point of inferior magnitude only, and, in ſome circumſtances, has been determined, as to other churches, by convenience and utility. The latter is a point of higher moment, and, though completely oppoſite to the principles of Independents, appears to be eſtabliſhed from the circumſtances which have been ſpecified. In ſome of the *foreign* Preſbyterian churches moreover, where the people are neither allowed to judge nor to vote, there are no private Seſſions in particular congregations, but the elders or rulers of a number of congregations, aſſociated as a Preſbytery, ſuperintend the affairs of each of theſe congregations, and determine in matters which concern the whole. Even then, if we ſuppoſe that the church at Jeruſalem was conſtituted upon the laſt of theſe plans, it is plain that every congregation which belonged to it, was not, in point of government, independent of the authoritative ſuperintendence of the miniſters of the reſt. And if we admit that it was formed like all other churches in the New Teſtament, and that each of its congregations had its ſeparate office-bearers who governed it, and that theſe again were connected in a general court, with the office-bearers of the reſt, who decided in matters of common concern, the ſame concluſion follows. Theſe congregations in Jeruſalem, even in the days of the apoſtles, were not independent of each other with regard to government, and therefore congregations ought certainly not to be independent in the preſent day.

Finally, is it affirmed, with Lockier and others, that the ſphere of ruling and of teaching ſhould be equal, becauſe the Theſſalonians are commanded "to know them "who were over them in the Lord, and who laboured "or preached among them?" 1 Theſſ. v. 12, 13. It is anſwered, that though they be enjoined there to know

thoſe who laboured among them in word and doctrine, and were over them in the Lord, it will not follow from this, that none were to be over them in the Lord, unleſs they thus ſtatedly laboured amongſt them. Though the former claſs of rulers were entitled to their reſpect, it can never be inferred that a ſeparate order, who were to govern but not to preach to them, were not entitled alſo to their dutiful regards. If this injunction does not prevent, even among Independents, thoſe who do not ſtatedly labour, from occaſionally preaching to them, or diſpenſing the ſacrament, why ſhould it prevent thoſe who do not ſtatedly labour among them, from occaſionally meeting to overſee and ſuperintend them, as well as to determine in matters of general concern? To aſſert, in fine, that becauſe, in the paſſage before us, Chriſtians are called to honour thoſe who not only ruled but taught among them, there can be no other rulers who can meet, from the elderſhips of other congregations, for deliberation, is to take for granted the thing to be proved. It is as if an inhabitant of Glaſgow ſhould ſay, Becauſe I am commanded by the Conſtitution to honour the Magiſtrates under whoſe ſuperintendence I live, there can be no other part of the Conſtitution which enjoins me to be ſubject to a Sheriff, becauſe he does not dwell amongſt us—or to the Lords of Seſſion, becauſe they are ſo far removed from us. But if reaſoning like this would be accounted abſurd in our political government, muſt it not be equally abſurd to infer from this command, which enjoins Chriſtians to honour thoſe who reſide amongſt them and rule over them, that there can be no other court appointed to review the deciſions of the former, becauſe the office-bearers in it do not ſtatedly reſide, and preach, and rule amongſt them?

LETTER XVII.

SIR,

AMONG the different arguments which have been urged by Presbyterians for courts of review, none undoubtedly is more striking or satisfactory than that which is drawn from the fifteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. You have been pleased particularly to consider this passage, and have endeavoured to overturn the reasoning of your opponents. Before concluding the present inquiry, it will therefore be proper to examine the force of this argument, and the validity of the reasons on which you object to its cogency.

Prior to your remarks on this celebrated chapter, you observe with triumph (though as to the first part of your assertion, I know not upon what authority), that "although it is *pretty generally* allowed that *little* can "be pleaded in support of the Presbyterian form of "church-government from *the Apostolic Epistles*, there is a "well known passage in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts "of the Apostles, on which the defence of this system is "generally rested. This," say you, "I long considered "as a strong hold in which I could sit in safety, and "subscribe myself a Presbyterian. I shall now shortly "state the arguments by which, in my apprehension at "least, it was no longer tenable." But instead of proceeding at present to review these arguments in order, permit me briefly, after adverting to the occasion of this reference from Antioch, to consider in the first place, The *form* of that assembly to which the reference is said to have been made. Secondly, Whether the decision which it delivered upon this occasion was simply an advice, or an authoritative determination? And in the third place, Whether the members of it were guided in their proceedings by a supernatural influence, or were left to the

exercise of their own prudence and sagacity, with the common aids of the sacred Spirit.

The occasion then of the reference, as narrated in the two first verses of the chapter, was this: Certain men, from Judea (probably believing Pharisees), had come down to Antioch, and taught the Christians there, that unless they were circumcised after the manner of Moses, they could not be saved. As this doctrine was contrary to that of Paul and Barnabas and their fellow-ministers, who were at that time at Antioch, a keen discussion ensued. Still however the Judaizing teachers refused to yield; and as a harmonious decision could not be obtained from the associated ministers at Antioch, or a decision at least sufficient to silence the former, it was agreed that it should be submitted to the determination of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. This proposal accordingly was put in execution, and Paul and Barnabas were appointed, on the one side, to go up to Jerusalem, and state their sentiments, as the Pharisaic teachers seem to have been nominated on the other, to support their views; and a meeting of the apostles and elders having been called, and the point discussed, a decision was made, and transmitted to Antioch. That we may discover then whether what is here recorded affords any precedent for courts of review as held by Presbyterians, let us consider, in the First place, *the form* of this assembly.

On this point there has been much variety of opinion. By Mr. Glass, yourself, and other Independents, it has been considered as composed of the church at Jerusalem together with her rulers, and the whole of the apostles; and the reference is supposed to have been simply that of one church to another. "The church of Jerusalem," says the first of these writers, in his Second Letter to Ayton, vol. i. p. 385. "the first church, where our Lord "left his apostles when he ascended, had this pre-eminence "above all other churches unto which the word came,

" that the word of God came firſt out from it; and " that other churches had their order, and the ordinances " of Chriſt, from that church." In proof of this he quotes Iſaiah ii. 1.—4. and Micah iv. 1, 2, 3. And afterwards he ſays (p. 386.), " When the believing " Gentiles were troubled with this queſtion, Whether " this was a part of the doctrine of repentance and " remiſſion of ſins to be preached to the Gentiles in " Chriſt's name, beginning at Jeruſalem? where were " they to ſeek the deciſion of it but there, where it was " the Lord's will, that the doctrine of repentance and " remiſſion of ſins ſhould begin, and from thence go " forth unto all nations? And what ſociety ſhould " determine this queſtion, but that ſociety wherein he " gave orders about it, and from which he would have " that doctrine to proceed, and go forth to the nations?" But when the reference is preſented, no mention is made of the *members* at Jeruſalem, though there is of the apoſtles and elders, a circumſtance which is unaccountable, if it was ſimply an appeal from one church to another; for if the conſtitution of the church at Jeruſalem was Independent, it muſt have been known at Antioch that the votes of the *members*, who were twenty times more numerous than the apoſtles and elders, would determine the queſtion. Beſides, as was obſerved alſo, none but the apoſtles and elders are ſaid to have come together to conſider the matter. If Mr. Glaſs's account however be juſt, ought not the *members* to have been ſummoned, and the decree to have been called *their* decree, as well as that of the apoſtles and elders. Beſides, is it not moſt whimſical and abſurd to maintain that the Chriſtian church at Jeruſalem, becauſe it was the firſt church on earth, and the reſidence of the apoſtles, was inveſted for almoſt thirty years with an univerſal Epiſcopacy over every other church? Such an inference is not ſupported by the paſſages quoted from Iſaiah and Micah. They aſſert indeed,

that the gospel was *to begin* to be preached from Jerusalem, but not a syllable is mentioned, either there or elsewhere, of the right of the church which was to be formed in that city, to determine the faith of every other church during the apostolic age, or in any other period. Though this power might be vested in the apostles as extraordinary ministers, on what principle could it be granted to the members at large of the church at Jerusalem? Was their opinion necessary to confirm the dictates of inspiration? or was it safe to submit the decisions of the apostles to their judgment and vote? Nay, even when the apostles were referred to as ordinary ministers, on what ground could the members indiscriminately claim a right not only of declaring, to the church which applied to them, the true doctrine of repentance, but (as will be afterwards proved) of authoritatively laying on them whatever burdens they chose?—This assembly, then, could not be merely a meeting of the members of the church at Jerusalem, together with the apostles and elders; and consequently the reference from the Christians at Antioch could not be an application from one Independent church to another.

But though this assembly at Jerusalem cannot be allowed to be the meeting of a particular congregation only, did it resemble a Presbyterian Synod in every respect, and include representatives from the churches of Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia, as well as of Jerusalem? Such was the opinion of the Presbyterian Divines in the Westminster Assembly—of the London Ministers—of Wood, Ayton, Hall, and Muir; but this, whether the case or not, is by no means necessary for our present argument in support of Presbytery. The appointment of the ministers of the different churches *next* to any congregation to constitute a Presbytery, for reviewing the deeds of the overseers of that congregation, and the appointment of the ministers of various Presbyteries *next* to a Presbytery to form a

Synod, for reviewing the conduct of that particular Presbytery, are matters altogether *circumstantial*, not essential to the first principles of Presbytery, and adopted *merely from convenience*. It is not of fundamental importance in Presbytery, whether its courts of review are composed of the ministers whose local situation is *nearest* each other, or of ministers who are placed at a *considerable distance;* or whether a Synod be made up of a particular number of separate Presbyteries, or of an assemblage of ministers from different and more remote places, but superior in number to those who constitute the Presbytery from which a reference is made to them. These circumstances must be determined from the particular pleasure and situation of those churches which agree in government, and can be more easily arranged in modern times than among ancient believers. Though then it could not be proved that there was a Synod at Jerusalem corresponding in all respects to a modern Synod, it will by no means, as Independents have often asserted, enervate the argument. The grand point to be ascertained is simply this, Were the ministers and church of Antioch subordinate, in this reference, to the authoritative review of a number of other ministers convened at Jerusalem as ministers of Christ, though the assembly should have resembled strictly neither a Presbytery, nor Synod, nor any such association? If this can be established, all the other arrangements will necessarily follow, and nothing more is requisite to demonstrate their propriety *.

* "The positive precepts of scripture," said a very distinguished character, when speaking on the subject of church-government, "are so expressed as to comprehend every possible case which can "occur in the subject to which they relate; and, in referring to "them, there can never be a deficiency either of direction or "authority. But when we refer to scriptural examples for the "authority of modern practice, we must not forget that an example "could not go beyond the circumstances of the particular case in

We are expreſsly told, that the church at Antioch referred the matter, for final deciſion, to the aſſembly convened at Jeruſalem, and that by this deciſion they determined to abide. The members of this court, as was before proved, appear to have been office-bearers alone: and even *the brethren*, who are joined with the apoſtles and elders in the letter which was written by this aſſembly, ſeem to have been of this deſcription; and were either prophets and evangeliſts, or other miniſters, who were at that time at Jeruſalem. The other members, beſides theſe brethren, were the common elders of the congregations in Jeruſalem, and the apoſtles, who, even as uninſpired teachers, were univerſal paſtors and

" which it occurred, although by fair inference or analogy it may " authorize many things which that caſe did not require or admit " of. The application of the church at Antioch to what has " been called the council of Jeruſalem, is an example and authority " for a *reference* from an inferior to a ſuperior court. The " example could in this point go no farther from the nature of " the caſe. But its *authority* goes far beyond it. It is quite " ſufficient to authorize an appeal or a complaint (as well as a " reference) from an inferior court to a ſuperior, and every other " juriſdiction of the ſuperior which the circumſtances require. " It authorizes not merely the ſubordination of one inferior to " one ſuperior court, which is all that the example mentions, " but ſuch a gradation of court-juriſdiction as the circumſtances " of the church of Chriſt, in different ſituations, render expedient. " This is but one illuſtration—but the idea may be illuſtrated by " a multitude of ſimilar caſes, and ſhews the abſurdity of the " conduct of Independents, who, while they neglect or explain " away a great part of the *practice* which is clearly found in the " Bible, affect to fix down the practice of modern times to the " preciſe *letter* of the *examples* they chooſe to refer to, though " ever ſo contrary to *their true ſpirit* and *deſign*. Every pin of " Preſbytery could not poſſibly be found in any ſcripture-example, " although the general ſyſtem is not only explicitly but clearly " authorized by the practice of the primitive church *as far* as the " caſes occurred."

miniſters to all the churches in the world. Here then is one fact which appears to be aſcertained, that there was a reference from the miniſters and members at Antioch to another court at Jeruſalem, which was not only competent completely to decide on the queſtion referred, but *which*, even as uninſpired, poſſeſſed the high authority of a general council, which could give univerſality to its decrees, and compoſed, as far as is recorded, of none but office-bearers.

But admitting that there was a reference here to another court, conſiſting of eccleſiaſtical office-bearers only, what was the degree of power which they exerciſed? Did they communicate an advice only to the miniſters at Antioch? or did they deliver a ſubordinately authoritative deciſion? That the latter, and not the former, was the degree of power which they are ſaid to have exerciſed, appears, agreeably to our *Second* poſition, to be very clearly manifeſt from the following conſiderations.

The deciſion which they delivered, as was before ſtated, is called a *decree*, Acts xvi. 4.; and the word δογμα, there rendered decree, in the only other four inſtances where it occurs in the New Teſtament, denotes, not merely an advice or opinion, but a law, or highly authoritative injunction. Thus, in Luke ii. 1. and Acts xvii. 7. it ſignifies the decrees of the Roman emperor, which certainly were more than ſimple advices; and in Eph. ii. 15. and Col. ii. 14. the ordinances or commandments of the ceremonial law, which certainly were more than admonitions. It is uſed alſo by the Seventy, in their tranſlation of Dan. ii. 13. iii. 10. 29. and iv. 6. to expreſs the decrees or mandates of Nebuchadnezzar, and Dan. vi. 8, 9. 12. 15. 26. the imperial decrees of Darius, as well as in two of the verſes of that chapter, to ſignify the laws of the Medes and Perſians, which altered not. Nor does the verb δογματιζω, in

Col. ii. 20. the only inſtance produced by Independents in ſupport of their opinion, ſeem to denote ſubjection merely to doctrine or inſtruction, but, as our tranſlators have rendered it, to ordinances or commandments. The things, for their undue ſubjection to which Paul reproves the Coloſſians, are called in ver. 22. the *commandments* of men, ενταλματα, by which we are unqueſtionably to underſtand the ceremonial precepts of the Moſaic law, which were originally binding as the commandments of God, but at that time were obligatory, upon thoſe who choſe to obey them, only as the commandments of men *.

Not only however is the deciſion of the apoſtles and elders called a decree, but we are informed, Acts xvii. 4. it was *ordained* by them, κεκριμενον, a word which, when applied to an aſſembly, and added to the former, imports the moſt decided exerciſe of authority. It is employed, for inſtance, by the Seventy, in their verſion of Eſther ii. 1. to expreſs the judgment of a Perſian council againſt Queen Vaſhti, when they *decreed* that ſhe ſhould be degraded from her regal ſituation; and the word συγκριμα, which is derived from it, is uſed, in their tranſlation of Dan. iv. 17. 24. &c. to ſignify *a decree*. And in Acts xxiv. 6. it denotes the authority of the Jewiſh ſanhedrin, or council of the elders, which Tertullus declares was ready to have proceeded to pronounce judgment upon Paul—as in Acts xiii. 27. it expreſſes the authority of

* Accordingly δογματιζεσθε, in Col. ii. 20. is explained, in the very ancient Syriac verſion, by a word which is equivalent to *judicamini*—" Are ye judged by theſe commandments?" by Eraſmus and Bullinger, " *Decretis tenemini*—Are ye bound by *theſe* " *decrees* of men?" by Gualther, Stephanus, and Beza, " *Ritibus* " *oneramini*—Are ye loaded with theſe rites or obſervances?" and by Budæus, Leigh, Parkhurſt, Wetſtein, and Kypke, " Have ye " theſe *decrees* or ordinances impoſed upon you? or, Are you ſubject " to theſe ordinances?"

this very court, when they tried and condemned the bleſſed Saviour. I do not indeed recollect a ſingle inſtance where it is not to be ſo underſtood, when applied to an aſſembly of judges or rulers.

The conduct, moreover, of the apoſtles and elders, on this occaſion, is expreſſed by their laying what appeared to them *a neceſſary burden* on the church of Antioch, than which words, I apprehend, few can be conceived more ſtrongly deſcriptive of the exerciſe of authority. Nor is it of any importance to object that the verſe ſhould be rendered, "It ſeemed good to the Holy "Ghoſt, and to us, that no burden ſhall henceforth be "laid upon you but theſe neceſſary things," and to aſſert that this burden is the ſame thing with *the yoke* mentioned, ver. 10. for ſtill, as Mr. Ewing allows, p. 74. 75. it implies that a burden was laid on them. When we are told, Matth. xxiii. 4. that the Phariſaic Rabbis bound heavy burdens upon the ſhoulders of men, do we not perceive ſomething more than mere inſtruction or admonition deſigned, and that they delivered them as their ενταλματα, or commandments, Matth. xv. 9. which all were to obey who wiſhed to be conſidered as of their ſect? In fine, this *decree, ordaining neceſſary things or burdens*, we are informed, ver. 28. ſeemed *good to them*, as well as to the Holy Ghoſt: "It ſeemed good to the "Holy Ghoſt, and," as it is in the Arabic verſion, "it "ſeemed good to us." And that this denotes a judicial deciſion ſeems manifeſt, not only from what has been already ſtated, but from the import of this phraſe, when applied to the deciſion of an aſſembly of rulers. Thus Joſephus (Antiq. book iv. chap. viii.), ſpeaking of a decree of their great ſanhedrin, diſobedience to which was puniſhed by death, repreſents it as το δοκουν; *i. e.* "what "ſeemed good to them." Thus too Demoſthenes, as quoted by Stephanus, δεδοχθαι τη βουλη, "it is decreed "by the ſenate;" and Plato, as cited by Budæus,

δεδοκται μοι καθαπερ, "it is certainly appointed for me to "die." Whether then we conſider theſe expreſſions ſeparately, or attend to them as united, nothing ſeems plainer than that the deciſion which was given by this aſſembly at Jeruſalem was not merely an advice or a declaration, whether they had commiſſioned theſe heretical teachers who had come down to Antioch to publiſh their errors, or whether what was taught by them was agreeable to the doctrine of repentance unto life, but an authoritative determination, to which the church at Antioch was bound moſt cheerfully to ſubmit in the Lord.

Still however, though this was an authoritative determination, are we certain that they were not directed in it by a miraculous influence? That this was the caſe is aſſerted by Mr. Glaſs, in his Letters to Ayton, where he ſays, that "the apoſtles acted in this council as "apoſtles, and were guided by an extraordinary mira-"culous influence." Mr. Ewing alſo ſays, that the reference was made to the apoſtles, as inſpired; that the elders too, who were joined with them, were probably inſpired; that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit were very generally enjoyed in the church at Jeruſalem; and that when the miniſters of this court pronounced theſe words, "It ſeemed good to the Holy Ghoſt, and to us," they ſpoke them unqueſtionably as infallible men. And you avow this to be your own opinion, and endeavour to defend it by a variety of arguments. Let us then inquire, *Thirdly*, Whether they were directed by this influence in the caſe before us, or were left to the exerciſe of their own wiſdom and ſagacity?

That the apoſtles were not uniformly directed by a miraculous influence I think you muſt grant, if you reflect for a moment on what is recorded in the goſpel-hiſtory. Many of their actions, as was formerly noticed,

such as the ordination of deacons, the dispensation of the sacraments, the preaching of the word, and, in many instances, the government of the church, did not require such a preternatural influence, for they were performed by men who were not inspired, and are still performed by men who have no miraculous influence, either of suggestion or of superintendence. To prove that what was done in this assembly was the dictate of inspiration, it is not sufficient to say that it was done partly by apostles, since even *they* were not always miraculously guided, but were left, with the common ministers of the church in every age, to their own wisdom and reflection, and the usual aids of the divine Spirit. You must produce something either from the subject of reference which was submitted to their investigation, or from their mode of procedure, or from their express declaration, or from the subsequent testimony of the sacred historian, before your hypothesis can be admitted. But from none of these, I apprehend, can this deduction be made, while, on the contrary, it seems probable, from a number of circumstances, that, in the whole of this business, they acted only as common ministers.

In the 1st place, Paul and Barnabas, at the original discussion at Antioch, acted not in the high character of apostles, but only of ordinary ministers. Had not this been the case, they could never have submitted to the ταξις or appointment of the church at Antioch to go up to Jerusalem (Acts xv. 2.), for as an apostle, Paul was far superior to them all, as Barnabas was to many of them, and could never have been authoritatively appointed by them. But had these ministers, when they delivered the very same opinion, as to the mind of the Spirit, which was afterwards affirmed in the council at Jerusalem, acted as inspired, or as directed by a miraculous superintending energy, can we suppose for a moment, that, in supporting their pretensions, they would resign the extraordinary

character which they assumed, and submit to a common decision of the office-bearers, appointing them to go up as commissioners to Jerusalem for the decision of the cause? What right had the ministers, or members, at Antioch to ordain these extraordinary ministers of Christ, who, inspired, or miraculously directed by his Spirit, had made known to them a part of his will, to go up to Jerusalem to ascertain whether the doctrine which they taught was true, and whether it corresponded with that of the other apostles, or to obtain *any* determination from these ministers on that subject? If Paul and Barnabas however, though extraordinary ministers, at the beginning of this business, did not act as extraordinary, but as ordinary ministers, this is one point at least, in which their pre-eminent character was laid aside; and it must require very strong evidence to convince us, that when the rest of the apostles met at Jerusalem, and delivered precisely *the very same determination*, they acted in a character in any degree superior.

2dly, If this question was to be determined by inspiration, it was unnecessary to have gone to Jerusalem for the decision. Paul certainly, as well as the other inspired ministers, was as able to have delivered such a decision as the apostles at Jerusalem; and unquestionably if evidence had been presented to the ministers of the church of Antioch, that the Holy Ghost, in a supernatural manner, had settled the matter, by communicating to them his will through a single minister, it must have been as decisive as if he had spoken to them by twelve. Is it said, that the Judaizing teachers at Antioch might have represented the other apostles at Jerusalem as of a different mind from Paul and Barnabas? It is replied, that not a single hint of this is mentioned in the whole of the narrative, a circumstance which is surprising, if that was the ground of the reference. Besides, the miracles which were performed by Paul as an

extraordinary minister, when, in this as well as other parts of the doctrine which he delivered, he laid claim to the character of an infallible teacher (Gal. iii. 5.), must have completely silenced such an objection, and satisfied the minds of the Christians at Antioch. Certainly it must have occurred to the brethren in that city, that the Holy Ghost could not contradict himself, and that he would not enable Paul to perform amongst them the same striking miracles in attestation of his doctrine, on the point in question, which he did at Galatia for that very purpose, if the sentiments of this minister had been contrary to those of the other inspired teachers. Since, then, had an inspired decision been wanted by the office-bearers and brethren at Antioch, Paul was as competent to have delivered it as the whole of the apostles, and since the evidence which he could produce, in confirmation of his decision, was as strong as theirs, nay, completely demonstrated that his mind, upon this subject, was the same with theirs, it seems plain that the determination which they wished, upon this occasion, must have been of a different description. Paul and Barnabas, it would appear, acted only as ordinary ministers, and, in the discussion which first of all took place at Antioch, stated what appeared to them to be the mind of God from an examination of the scriptures, while the Pharisaic teachers, on the contrary, who made very high pretensions to a knowledge of the Old Testament, obstinately defended an opposite opinion. As the veneration which was still paid to the latter for their knowledge of the law, even by the converted Jews, was extreme, and as Paul and they could not agree, it was resolved that the matter should be referred to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. By their determination of the sense of the law, upon this interesting topic, both parties were to be regulated; and, in ascertaining its sense, it seems plain that it was not expected that they should be guided

by inſpiration, for had inſpiration been wanted by them to ſettle the queſtion, or had Paul laid claim to it when he delivered his opinion, and confirmed his pretenſions to it by undeniable miracles, it is obvious that no reference could have been made to Jeruſalem. The Spirit which performed miracles by Paul, in atteſtation of his opinion, could not oppoſe the Spirit who dwelt in the apoſtles; and conſequently it muſt have been utterly improper, as well as unneceſſary, to have ſent to Jeruſalem to ſee whether Paul's ſentiments accorded with theirs, or whether the apoſtles had commiſſioned theſe men from Judea to teach the doctrine which Paul condemned, or for any purpoſe that Independents have ſpecified.

In the 3d place, The perſons to whom this reference was made, were not only apoſtles but ordinary elders. When Paul and Barnabas (Acts xv. 2.) had had no ſmall diſſenſion and diſputation with the falſe teachers at Antioch, the rulers of that church determined that theſe miniſters ſhould go up to Jeruſalem, to the apoſtles and elders, about this queſtion. If then, as is plain, the term *elder* is employed in ſcripture to repreſent only *ordinary* miniſters of Chriſt, or extraordinary miniſters in their *ordinary capacity*, and if the reference, in this caſe, was made to theſe miniſters *equally* with the apoſtles; if they *met officially* "*to conſider of the matter*" (ver. 6.)—claim *authoritative ſuperiority* to the falſe teachers, and declare that they were entitled to teach nothing but what they *commanded* them (ver. 24.)—*decide* on the queſtion, and ſay that it ſeemed good to *them*, as well as to the apoſtles and the Spirit, to lay upon the brethren at Antioch neceſſary burdens (ver. 28.); and if the deciſion which was made be called *their decrees*, as well as the decrees of the apoſtles (chap. xvi. 4.); it ſeems neceſſarily to follow, that the apoſtles, as well as elders, muſt have acted here only as ordinary miniſters. Had not this been

the caſe, it was impoſſible for the elders *to be judges at all.* The apoſtles alone being extraordinary rulers, and poſſeſſed of miraculous influence, elders could *have ſubmitted* only, and not *judged;* for men who were uninſpired could certainly not add, by their councils or opinions, to the dictates of inſpiration, and much leſs could they be requiſite to prevent it from erring: conſequently, ſince they, as well as the apoſtles, are ſaid to be referred to as judges, and to have diſcharged this duty, the apoſtles muſt have acted, on this occaſion, only as *ordinary* miniſters.

Mr. Ewing indeed affirms, p. 19. that the elders ſpecified, were probably endowed with the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghoſt. This however is a gratuitous aſſertion, for no part of the ſacred hiſtory ſupports it. Beſides, though it were admitted that ſome of the ordinary miniſters, as well as the members, of many primitive churches were poſſeſſed of theſe gifts, it cannot be demonſtrated that it was the univerſal attainment of *all* the common paſtors of this, or any of theſe primitive churches *, while, on the contrary, it can be evinced that the term *elder* is applied uſually in ſcripture to officers who have no ſuch miraculous endowments, nor extraordinary character. Is it alleged, moreover, as Mr. Ewing does, that the meſſage from Antioch was intended to aſcertain not merely a point of doctrine, but alſo a point of fact—not merely whether Gentile believers muſt be circumciſed, but whether the men from Judea had been ſent by theſe miniſters at Jeruſalem to teach the brethren at Antioch to this effect? It is anſwered, that it is obvious from the ſacred narrative, as has been already proved, that the elders, not leſs than the apoſtles, were

* If there were only ſix elders, or even one elder, in this aſſembly, who was not inſpired, and yet was allowed to judge, all the reſt muſt have acted only as ordinary miniſters, otherwiſe he could not have judged, but could only have ſubmitted.

directly applied to, to decide the controversy or question, as well as to ascertain the fact (if an application for the latter purpose was made at all); that they equally came together *to consider of the matter*—and this certainly could not be the *matter* of fact, for of that there could be no doubt; that they both authoritatively, not merely ascertained a fact, but laid necessary burdens, or things, upon the church at Antioch; and that the *decrees* which they passed, not unquestionably about a fact, but about the question referred, are denominated the decrees of both. Or is it affirmed again with that writer, that it is not wonderful that the brethren at Antioch should have joined the apostles and elders together in their message, when the apostles sometimes class themselves in the same manner *, and, on this occasion, take along with them not only the elders, but the whole church, in their reply? We observe, that it is yet to be demonstrated that the whole of the common members of the church, as well as the elders, were included by them in their reply; and that the contrary has at least been attempted to be established.—And as when Peter denominates himself, in the passage here cited, an elder or presbyter, he speaks of himself only as a common ruler, so, in this light, I contend that he, as well as his fellow-apostles, are to be viewed in this meeting at Jerusalem. Besides, even if this term, when applied to that apostle, was descriptive of him as an extraordinary minister of Christ, it is plain that when it is bestowed upon ordinary ministers, as in the case before us, it must be understood in a completely different sense. And though Paul joins with himself others who were not apostles, in the salutations and benedictions which he delivers in his Epistles to several Christian churches, he never says of himself and these inferior ministers, It seemed good to us, and

* See 1 Peter v. 1.

the Holy Ghoſt, to lay upon you neceſſary burdens; and never, as was before noticed, are his Epiſtles to theſe churches called, like theſe decrees, the Epiſtles of Paul and Timothy, or Paul and Silvanus. Theſe were prerogatives to which none of the companions of Paul were admitted, but prerogatives which are aſcribed, in the preſent caſe, to the elders as well as apoſtles; and conſequently this circumſtance, in the view of every candid and unprejudiced mind, muſt mark an equality of power, as having been exerciſed by them in the inſtance before us.

Farther, is it maintained with Glaſs*, that when "we read of the apoſtles, and elders, and brethren, "acting in this matter, we muſt underſtand that every "one of them did the part that was proper to them? "that the apoſtles brought forth and infallibly declared "the mind and will of the Lord Chriſt upon this "ſubject; that the preſidents or elders of the church "in Jeruſalem went before the brethren *as enſamples of* "*ſubjection* unto the revelation of the mind and will of "the Lord by the apoſtles, and were their leaders in "this matter; and that the brethren *obeyed* and *ſubmitted* "*themſelves* to their preſidents and guides, who agreed "in judging according to the mind and will of Chriſt "brought forth by the apoſtles?" The ſame objections ſeem to preſent themſelves to this, as to the preceding explanations. On this ſuppoſition, it is evident that the elders did not judge, with regard to the point of controverſy, any more than the common members at Jeruſalem, or *even than the members at Antioch;* that all that they did, was merely, like the brethren in Antioch and Jeruſalem, *to ſubmit* to the deciſion of the apoſtles; and that the latter were the only arbiters in the buſineſs. But how can this be reconciled with what has been

* See his Second Letter to Ayton.

already ſtated, that the elders, as well as apoſtles, met officially "to conſider of the matter?" Since then the buſineſs was referred to and determined by the elders as well as apoſtles, both of them muſt have acted only as ordinary rulers, for had any of them been directed as extraordinary miniſters by a miraculous influence of ſuggeſtion or ſuperintendence, the reſt, as Glaſs very honeſtly confeſſes, could only have ſubmitted, and could not have been allowed to judge at all.

Laſtly, The manner of procedure, in this court, does not indicate that they acted as extraordinary miniſters, or were directed by a ſupernatural influence from God. We are told by Luke, Acts xv. 7. that, in the beginning of their conſultation, "there was *much diſputing* "amongſt them." But ſurely thoſe perſons, whoſe deciſion was not paſſed till after much diſputation, could not all have been inſpired, or do not, at leaſt during the whole of their meeting, appear to have been guided by a miraculous influence. "Here, however, it may be "remarked," ſay you, p. 42. "that the expreſſion "συζητησις ſeems by no means neceſſarily to imply oppo- "ſition of ſentiment, but ſimply mutual diſcuſſion or "inquiry. It is indeed the ſame word rendered *diſputa-* "*tion*, ver. 2. but there it is connected with another "(στασις), tranſlated diſſenſion, which, from its uſe in "other paſſages, clearly indicates the moſt decided oppoſi- "tion of ſentiment. This is apparent from its being uſed, "chap xxiii. 7. 10. to denote the diſſenſion that took "place between the Phariſees and Sadducees. It would "rather argue a tautology in the ſacred writer, if, in "ver. 2. of this chapter, he employs two words to expreſs "preciſely the ſame idea." It by no means however appears a tautology to render συζητησις "diſputation," in the 2d verſe; for the word στασις, tranſlated "diſ- "ſenſion," may denote the oppoſition of ſentiment that was between them, and συζητησις, the diſputation

which enſued in conſequence of that diſſenſion or contrariety of ſentiment. Beſides, we know that the verb from which it comes, is uſed in Acts vi. 9. to expreſs *the diſputation* which took place between Stephen and the Libertines, Cyrenians, and Alexandrians; and in Acts ix. 29. the diſputation of Saul againſt the Grecians; and a kindred-noun is employed by Paul, 1 Cor. i. 20. to ſignify *the diſputer* of this world. That this is the ſenſe in which συζητησις muſt be underſtood in the 7th verſe, ſeems evident from this, that it is ſaid that *after there had been much* συζητησις, Peter roſe, and ſaid, "Why "tempt ye God to put a yoke upon the neck of the "diſciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to "bear?" Had there been only however, as you expreſs it, "*mutual inquiry* on this ſubject," how could he reprobate what had been already ſaid by them, as approaching almoſt *to a tempting of God?* Is *inquiry*, which is a duty when lawfully proſecuted, to be branded with *ſuch a name?* And ſince the conduct of part at leaſt of the preſent aſſembly (whether they ſimply *inquired*, as you contend that the word ſhould be rendered, or keenly *diſputed*, as others maintain) is diſtinguiſhed by this name, as far as the buſineſs had already proceeded, is this conſiſtent, I would aſk you, with the ſuppoſition, that they were either guided by an *infallible* energy, or by miraculous ſuggeſtion?

"But waving your remark," ſay you, p. 43. "and "admitting that there was really a debate in the church "on this occaſion, Dr. Doddridge's Note on the paſ-"ſage ſeems extremely juſt. This diſpute," he obſerves, "does not appear to have been among the apoſtles "themſelves."—But how this obſervation, which appears to you ſo juſt, can be conſidered as admiſſible, I do not ſee. We are expreſsly told, ver. 6. after what had been mentioned of the diſſenſions which had taken place upon this ſubject at Antioch, and probably at Jeruſalem, that *the apoſtles and elders came together to*

conſider the matter. Now, ſince this is ſtated in the very verſe which goes before, it would naturally, I think, occur to any unprejudiced mind, that the much diſputing, mentioned in the next verſe, muſt have happened only among the apoſtles and elders, who had *come together to conſider the matter.* To none but them was the buſineſs referred; and as none but they are here repreſented to have aſſembled to deliberate about it, on what principle can it be proved, either from the authority of Dr. Doddridge, or of any other writer, that any but the apoſtles and elders diſputed? And if they had not only diſputation, but *much diſputation*, before they were even prepared to attend to the propoſal which was made to them by Peter, is it probable that the aſſembly, during *the whole* of the diſcuſſion, was either ſupernaturally inſpired, or miraculouſly ſuperintended by the *ſame ſacred Spirit?* If this was the caſe, that Spirit, who is the author of order and not of confuſion, of unity and not of diſcord, muſt as yet at leaſt have ſtimulated the whole of this great aſſembly, who were all inſpired, or conducted by his influence, to mutual controverſy and mutual diſſenſion.

But if *much diſputation* prevailed in this aſſembly before they were addreſſed by Peter and James, what method was adopted by theſe apoſtles to bring them to unanimity, and to lead them to the deciſion which they at laſt paſſed? Did they lay claim to any extraordinary inſpiration of the Spirit, to bend the minds of the diſſentient brethren? or is it any where declared, that the Spirit, after this, deſcended, and diſpoſed them to make an enlightened and harmonious determination? No, aſſuredly. None of theſe claims was made by Peter or his fellow-apoſtles, and no ſuch extraordinary inſpiring influence is even, in *the moſt diſtant manner*, affirmed to have been communicated after this to any, or all of them. We are merely told, that Peter *reaſoned* with them, to

prove that the Gentiles needed not to be circumciſed in order to ſalvation, as any Chriſtian miniſter might now do, from facts which were obvious and notorious to all. He informs them, that they all knew that a good while ago (alluding to the converſion of Cornelius), God made choice among them, that the Gentiles by his mouth ſhould hear the word of the goſpel; and that God, who knoweth the hearts, bare them witneſs, beſtowing upon them the Holy Ghoſt, in his miraculous gifts and ſaving benefits, even as he did to them; and put no difference between the one and the other, purifying their hearts by faith. After this it is ſaid, that, in confirmation of the ſame truth, Barnabas and Paul declared what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them: and then it is mentioned, that, to eſtabliſh the ſame doctrine, James quoted a paſſage from the prophet Amos, as explicitly ſupporting the ſentiments of his brethren. But what is there in this which beſpeaks inſpiration? Was it impoſſible for them to deduce ſuch concluſions from theſe miracles, theſe facts, and theſe prophecies, without being inſpired, or directed by a miraculous influence? If ſo, how can ſimilar concluſions be now made on other ſubjects, and with perfect accuracy, by men who are neither ſo inſpired nor directed? If however, on the contrary, as appears to be inconteſtable, all this might have been done by them then, as well as by miniſters now, without the inſpiration of ſuggeſtion or ſuperintendence, and if neither they themſelves, nor the ſacred hiſtorian, claim for them either of theſe kinds of inſpiration, on what principle can it conſiſtently be maintained that they were, at this time, conducted by this miraculous energy?

Is it objected further with Glaſs *, that it cannot be demonſtrated that the apoſtles and other miniſters were

* See his Second Letter to Ayton.

not inſpired, from their eſtabliſhing their opinion by reaſoning from miracles and ancient prophecies, becauſe the ſame thing is done in all the inſpired Epiſtles, which yet were written by an infallible influence? It is anſwered, that if the mere circumſtance of their reaſoning does not appear of itſelf to prove that they were not inſpired, it is at leaſt a preſumptive argument againſt it, unleſs their inſpiration could be evinced from other conſiderations; and when viewed together with the circumſtances which attended their reaſoning, it ſeems to be completely deciſive. Beſides, there is a moſt ſtriking difference between the reaſonings of the apoſtles in their inſpired Epiſtles, and in the caſe in queſtion. Before they wrote their Epiſtles, they were fully ſatisfied of the mind of Chriſt as to the point of which they were to ſpeak, and all the reaſoning which they employ in them, under his direction, is ſimply to recommend it to their fellow-men. But here they aſſemble to aſcertain his mind about a point as to which they were yet uncertain, and before they determine on it, ſo as to announce it to others, have much diſputation and reaſoning reſpecting it among themſelves. It is evident therefore that the objection is not in point, and that before any thing can be deduced from it, a caſe muſt be produced in which a number of apoſtles and ordinary miniſters met under extraordinary ſuperintending influence to write an inſpired Epiſtle, and before they determined upon what they ſhould ſay, had much diſputation and diſcuſſion among themſelves. But this Mr. Glaſs never attempted to produce, and no Independent has ever been able to bring forward.

Or is it alleged with Doddridge, as quoted by you, p. 43. "That if the apoſtles really had debated the "caſe awhile, their deciſion at laſt might have been "under an unerring direction: and that there appears "to be no reaſon to conclude that their inſpira-"tion was always ſo inſtantaneous and expreſs, as to

" ſuperſede any deliberation of their own minds, or any " conſultation with each other?". It is here conceded, that when the apoſtles and elders firſt met, they were not under an infallible miraculous influence; and if they were not under that influence when they firſt convened, it will be difficult to aſcertain, from the ſacred hiſtory, when the *afflatus* or guidance began. It is alſo to be recollected, that if this aſſembly met and reaſoned ſo long as to the mind of the Spirit, and yet were inſpired from the period that they convened, or at laſt obtained this ſupernatural influence after *much diſputation*, the caſe is ſo *extraordinary*, and ſo entirely different from every other inſtance of the inſpiration of the Spirit recorded either in the Old or New Teſtament, that before it can be admitted, very explicit declarations of the fact muſt be produced. But none of theſe, we believe, can be found by any one who turns his attention to the narrative of Luke; and all that is mentioned by the Doctor, and other Independents, is, that *it might be the caſe*. On the whole, even though it were allowed that the apoſtles and elders might conſult together before the Spirit was pleaſed to make known to them his will, I would aſk any man, whether it is probable that he would ſuffer them to meet in his name as an inſpired aſſembly (if they were referred to as ſuch), and not merely adviſe with each other, but diſpute, and even have ſo much diſputation as that they are actually ſaid to have been almoſt guilty *of tempting him?*

In fine, you obſerve, p. 43. that " no one calls " in queſtion the infallibility of this deciſion by what- " ever proceſs it was formed. This, then," you remark, " is enough for our argument. While the apoſtles " were at Jeruſalem, while they could give an in- " fallible anſwer to the queſtion appealed to them; " while they could aſſuredly ſay, *Thus it ſeemed good to*

" *the Holy Ghoſt*, and quote miracles in ſupport of the " aſſertion; then the church at Jeruſalem was in a ſtate " totally peculiar, and an appeal to it, in ſuch circum- " ſtances, forms no argument for a ſimilar appeal to any " other church." We know aſſuredly, from the ſacred records, that their deciſion was *juſt*, but that it was *inſpired*, or *infallible*, is not ſtated. It is manifeſt that they *did not err* in their determination, but that they *might not have erred* in it, as well as in their debates and reaſonings, is not aſſerted. Reſpecting therefore the poſſibility of their erring it is needleſs to debate, and it ought rather to be ſatisfactorily proved by Independents, that *they could not diſcover* the truth, on this ſubject, without ſuch an influence—a point which as yet they have forgotten to demonſtrate. Beſides, that they were able to quote a miracle in confirmation of their opinion, which was wrought, *not during the time of their meeting* to determine their judgment, but a conſiderable time before, is no proof that they were inſpired, or guided by an extraordinary infallible influence to draw from it a certain and juſt concluſion. *Any miniſter* of Chriſt, though not an apoſtle, nor inſpired, nor guided by a ſupernatural energy, might certainly have drawn from it the inference which they did; and we know that miracles, performed in the days of Chriſt and his apoſtles, can be adduced *by us now*, in ſupport of many doctrines. Nor was there any thing extraordinary, as you would inſinuate, in their declaring that their deciſion had appeared good to the Holy Ghoſt. It evidently refers to its according with his revelation in the Old-Teſtament ſcriptures as quoted by James, and with the miracle which he performed upon Cornelius and his houſe, and not to any new and ſupernatural communication. But what is there in this which may not now be aſſerted by the miniſters of Chriſt,

as is obſerved by the learned and judicious Whitaker *, "if, like this aſſembly, they decree and determine nothing but from ſcripture, and if they ſhall examine all "queſtions by the ſcripture, and ſhall follow the voice "of ſcripture in all their decrees?" In ſhort, not only do the apoſtles and elders ſay, that it ſeemed good to the Holy Ghoſt, but that it ſeemed good alſo to them, an expreſſion which appears to be unaccountable, if they were either under an influence of ſuggeſtion or ſuperintendence. Did any of the ancient prophets ever employ this language, "Thus ſaith the Lord, and thus "ſay we?" And if it was the Holy Ghoſt alone who now ſpake by the apoſtles, and decided the queſtion, and if they gave an infallible decree only as his miniſters or inſtruments, and with a conſcioufneſs of his inſpiration, how could they repreſent it as ſeeming good to them diſtinct from the Spirit? Neither, then, from this, nor any other circumſtance, has it yet appeared that this aſſembly was inſpired, while, on the contrary, it ſeems manifeſt, from the conſiderations which have been mentioned, that they were left to the guidance of their own prudence and ſagacity, and the common influences of the ſacred Spirit.

LETTER XVIII.

SIR,

THE fifteenth of the Acts once appeared to you a ſtrong hold, in which you could ſit in ſafety and ſubſcribe yourſelf a Preſbyterian, but you have been induced, it ſeems, to capitulate to Independents, becauſe you have been led to perceive that the caſe which it records was extraordinary, and affords no precedent for courts

* See his Controv. iii. Quæſt. vi.

of review. Your reaſons for adopting ſuch a concluſion were the following.

1ſt, You obſerve, p. 38. that the members at Jeruſalem, as well as the rulers, are repreſented as all uniting in the deciſion which was formed on the queſtion appealed *; and, in like manner, when that deciſion was tranſmitted to Antioch, it was the multitude (ver. 30.), plainly meaning the church at large, that was gathered together to receive it. "This ſurely," you add, "favours much "more of the Independent, than of the Preſbyterian "form of government." It is yet however to be proved that the members from Antioch united as judges in this deciſion. And though all the members from Antioch had been preſent when the deciſion of the aſſembly at Jeruſalem was delivered, all that could be inferred would be merely this, that the people have a right *to hear* the determinations of a ſuperior court.

2dly, You remark, that "there was ſomething more "in this caſe, which made it obviouſly very different "from the Preſbyteries or Synods of modern times. We "have not, in this paſſage, an account of repreſentatives "aſſembled in convocation from a variety of different "churches, where a certain number is eſſentially neceſſary "to conſtitute what is termed the court: we have "ſimply an application from one individual church to "another, reſpecting a conteſted queſtion that occur-"red, and that had been ſuggeſted by perſons profeſſedly "coming from that church to which the application was "made." On this let it be obſerved, that the preceding reaſoning was not intended to prove that the aſſembly at Jeruſalem reſembled either a modern Preſbytery or Synod, but only that it conſtituted an eccleſiaſtical court *diſtinct*

* This certainly can never be conſidered as an appeal, but only a reference, for no contrary ſentence was given at Antioch, from which any proteſt or appeal was made to Jeruſalem.

from that at Antioch, and to which the latter was subordinate. It is not contended that we find in it the model of either of these representative courts, but that it exhibits a most decided evidence of the subjection of one court of ordinary ministers to the authoritative review and superintendence of another. Since it is adduced, of course, only to establish *the general principle of subordination* to courts superior to an individual congregation, and since no argument is brought from it for the *particular* form of Presbyterian courts, the objection under consideration must be wholly irrelevant. Besides, it is to be remembered that the reference was not from one Christian church to another. Though the matter was referred to the apostles and elders *at* Jerusalem, it is not said that it was referred to them as the ministers *of* Jerusalem. And, as was before remarked, since it is granted by your brethren that more than a simple advice was given, if it be affirmed that the ministers and church of Jerusalem exercised an act of authoritative power over the church of Antioch, unless it can be proved that the former were inspired, consequences will follow from it, subversive not merely of Presbytery, but even of Independency. If none but the ministers of the church in Jerusalem were applied to, then the ministers of a parent-congregation may be solicited by another congregation to decide what shall be taught and practised among them, in any case of difficulty, where they cannot themselves agree. But is not this to admit the principle of subordination to a court superior to the eldership of a particular congregation? and is it not better that the court, to which this subordination is to be yielded, should be composed of the ministers of several churches than only of one congregation? And if the members as well as ministers of the church at Jerusalem judged in the reference from Antioch, does it not follow, as was before noticed, that one Tabernacle-church may sit in judgment on the affairs of

another? Might not the church in Glaſgow determine what ſhould be taught in the church at Dundee, and the church at Edinburgh exert an authoritative power over both? And will not this ſubordination of churches unavoidably enſue from your repreſentation, unleſs you can prove that the church at Jeruſalem was guided by a miraculous infallible influence, which is not now vouchſafed to Chriſtian congregations?

3dly, You affirm, that "the ſubject of the appeal "was peculiar. It has indeed," you ſay, "been mat-"ter of diſpute, whether the queſtion reſpecting the "liberty of Gentiles related to all converts to Chriſ-"tianity, or only to thoſe who were converted to Chriſ-"tianity from among ſuch as were previouſly religious "proſelytes. It is not here neceſſary to enter into that "diſcuſſion: it is ſufficient to obſerve that whether it "be underſtood to refer to the one or to the other, it "was a queſtion of very extenſive importance at that "time to the Chriſtian world; a queſtion of ſuch a kind "too, that no ſimilar one can now occur, and which "only needed once to be decided, effectually to ſettle the "diſpute at every ſucceeding period."

The queſtion which was diſcuſſed in this eccleſiaſtical court was certainly not of more general or ſtriking importance than others which have been examined in many modern, uninſpired, eccleſiaſtical courts. Will any Independent maintain, for inſtance, that *the doctrines of grace*, which, in the language of the Father of our glorious Reformation, are the *articuli ſtantis aut cadentis eccleſiæ* (*i. e.* the points upon the reception or rejection of which the church muſt ſtand or fall), and which were diſcuſſed ſo fully in the Synod of Dort, were not of equal magnitude with the queſtion which was conſidered at Jeruſalem? It is manifeſt alſo, as was before ſhewn, that *the manner* in which this queſtion was determined by this aſſembly, as

far at leaſt as is ſtated in ſcripture, was in no reſpect different from that in which queſtions may now be decided in eccleſiaſtical courts. May not they too, though not inſpired, or miraculouſly guided, examine the ſcriptures, and the extraordinary works performed in the primitive ages of the church, and by theſe regulate the judgments which they pronounce? And it ſeems preſumptuous to affirm that no ſimilar queſtion can ever again occur, and that this queſtion needed only once to be determined, effectually to ſettle and ſilence the diſpute. It is impoſſible for any one poſitively to ſay what differences of opinion may yet be diſcovered reſpecting the meaning of the ſacred oracles, and differences which may, as in former times, even upon important points, divide the world. With regard to this queſtion, beſides, it is worthy of being remarked, that even after its determination by this aſſembly at Jeruſalem, it ſtill appears to have been agitated in many Chriſtian churches. Paul, in his Epiſtles to the Corinthians, Philippians, and Theſſalonians, written at a much later period, combats preciſely the very ſame errors. Nay, what would have been unneceſſary if this determination had been inſpired, or the opinion of twelve had been ſuperior to that of one apoſtle, he never once refers to it as infallible and finally deciſive, but expoſes their fallacy by reaſoning only. In fine, if there was a queſtion here which concerned the world, there was an aſſembly convened, partly compoſed of men who were the miniſters of all the Chriſtian churches in the world. And if a General Aſſembly, or Œcumenic Council, judged in a matter of univerſal importance, may not the miniſters of a number of different congregations meet like them, and judge authoritatively in matters which relate to all theſe congregations?

4thly, You allege, that "it ſeems pretty obvious that "when Paul ſpeaks of going up to Jeruſalem by reve-

" lation, Gal. ii. 2. he alludes to the journey he took " upon this occaſion; and this furniſhes another ſtriking " peculiarity in the caſe before us." In confirmation of this aſſertion, you refer us to a Note of M'Knight on the paſſage. The aſſertion which you here make, amounts to nothing more than a hypotheſis, ſupported merely by an ingenious *conjecture* of a reſpectable commentator, which certainly muſt be acknowledged to be too feeble a foundation for ſo important a deduction. Something poſitive or explicit ought undoubtedly to be advanced before it can be allowed that this court was inſpired. Beſides, you are ſenſible that ſo high an authority as that of the celebrated Paley has ventured to call in queſtion the hypotheſis of M'Knight, and ſtated to it objections which have never yet been anſwered, and which cannot be overturned by the bare aſſertion of Mr. Ewing, " that he does not think them ſufficiently " concluſive." " It may be doubted," ſays he, " to what " journey the words which open the ſecond chapter of " the Epiſtle (that to the Galatians), *then fourteen years* " *afterwards I went up unto Jeruſalem*, relate. That " which beſt correſponds with the date, and that to " which moſt interpreters apply the paſſage, is the " journey of Paul and Barnabas to Jeruſalem, when " they went thither from Antioch, upon the buſineſs of " the Gentile converts; and which journey produced " the famous council and decree recorded in the fifteenth " chapter of the Acts. To me this opinion appears to " be encumbered with ſtrong objections. In the Epiſtle, " Paul tells us that *he went up by revelation*, chap. ii. " ver. 2. In the Acts, we read that he was ſent by the " church of Antioch, chap. xv. ver. 2. This is not " very reconcileable. In the Epiſtle, St. Paul writes " that when he came to Jeruſalem, he communicated " that goſpel which he preached among the Gentiles, " but privately, to them which were of reputation,

" chap. ii. ver. 2. If by that gospel be meant the im-
" munity of the Gentile Christians from the Jewish law
" (and I know not what else it can mean), it is not
" easy to conceive how he should communicate that
" privately, which was the subject of his public mes-
" sage. But a yet greater difficulty remains, *viz.* that
" in the account which the Epistle gives of what passed
" upon this visit at Jerusalem, no notice is taken of the
" deliberation and decree which are recorded in the
" Acts, and which, according to that history, formed
" the business for the sake of which the journey was
" undertaken. The mention of the council and of its
" determination, whilst the apostle was relating his pro-
" ceedings at Jerusalem, could hardly have been avoided,
" if in truth the narration belong to the same journey.
" To me it appears much more probable that Paul had
" taken some journey to Jerusalem, the mention of
" which is omitted in the Acts. Prior to the apostolic
" decree, we read that Paul and Barnabas abode at
" Antioch a long time with the disciples*. Is it un-
" likely that during this long abode, they might go up
" to Jerusalem and return to Antioch? Or would the
" omission of such a journey be unsuitable to the gene-
" ral brevity with which these memoirs are written,
" especially of those parts of St. Paul's history which
" took place before the historian joined his society †?"

But admitting that this masterly reasoning could be overthrown, and that Paul, when he tells us that he went up by revelation to Jerusalem, refers to his going up as a commissioner from Antioch, what is to be inferred from this extraordinary incident? That the assembly to which he was to go, was to be actuated either by a miraculous influence, or guided by a supernatural superintending energy? No, assuredly. The degree of gifts

* Acts xiv. 28. † Horæ Paulinæ, p. 195.

poſſeſſed by this aſſembly for the deciſion of the queſtion, and the manner in which they were to determine it, muſt be learned from other circumſtances. Perhaps the court was to be divinely inſpired, or perhaps it was to be directed only by common prudence, and the uſual aids of the ſacred Spirit—and the deſign of the Spirit in ſuggeſting it to Paul to go up to Jeruſalem, and to ſubmit the cauſe to the apoſtles and elders, even as ordinary miniſters, might be to point out to his church, in future times, a pattern for them to follow in difficult caſes. None of theſe however can be deduced from the ſupernatural admonition of the Spirit, for this might have been given on either ſuppoſition. I maintain, therefore, that you are not entitled to infer, from this circumſtance, that the aſſembly, to which the apoſtle was to refer the buſineſs, was either inſpired, or infallibly directed; and that there is equal reaſon for believing that this buſineſs was ſubmitted to a ſuperior court, even of uninſpired miniſters, to exhibit a clear and ſatisfactory example of the manner in which important and difficult queſtions were thenceforth to be determined in the Chriſtian church.

" Obſerve," ſay you, 5thly, " the very peculiar circum-
" ſtances in which the church at Jeruſalem ſtood, from its
" being the ſeat of the reſidence of the apoſtles. To
" them was committed the important charge of teaching
" the diſciples all things whatſoever they ſhould obſerve.
" At this time it is very queſtionable, if any part of the
" New-Teſtament ſcriptures was committed to writing.
" At any rate, we know that none of the Apoſtolic
" Epiſtles had yet any exiſtence; far leſs were they
" collected as we have them now, for the benefit of
" Chriſtians at large, and for their direction in any caſe
" of difficulty that might occur. This certainly placed
" the church at Jeruſalem in a ſituation altogether
" peculiar. The apoſtles then occupied the room that
" the New-Teſtament ſcriptures do now. It was as

" proper to consult them personally at that time, as it " is for us now to have recourse to their writings to " decide upon any point of New-Testament worship. It " is true, Paul was at Antioch, and he undoubtedly " possessed inspiration and apostolic authority as well as " the rest. But, on that occasion, the persons who " taught that doctrine respecting the necessity of cir- " cumcision came from Judea, the seat of the rest of the " apostles. It is pretty apparent from ver. 24. that these " persons represented them as favouring their views. In " this situation, Paul must have had an authority at least pa- " ramount to his own alleged in opposition to it. Nothing " in this case could give such perfect satisfaction, as the " united decision of the apostles when assembled together."

It is readily conceded, that the church of Jerusalem stood, at that period, in very peculiar circumstances, but not so peculiar as you would insinuate. Though the New-Testament scriptures were not then completed, and though many references were made to the *apostles* who resided at Jerusalem, as to matters of doctrine, I must again tell you, that I cannot see why you affirm that they were made also to the whole of the Christians who dwelt at Jerusalem. If these references required inspiration for their determination, most of the Christians at Jerusalem could no more decide upon them than the churches from which they came. And if they did not require it, and yet were settled by authoritative sentences from the apostles, the common members at Jerusalem had no more right to pass them upon *other* churches than the members at Corinth, or Ephesus, or Rome had. Let it be allowed then, that the apostles, till the New Testament was completed, were usually referred to, while they remained at Jerusalem, as the final arbiters of religious controversies—what follows? That, when they delivered these decisions, they were *always* inspired? Such a conclusion would be *a begging of the question*, or a

taking for granted what neither you nor any other mortal can prove. It would be saying that God never suffered them occasionally to ascertain his mind from the Old-Testament scriptures, and from any miraculous works which he had previously performed, but guided them always by a supernatural influence, which is too presumptuous, I should think, for any imperfect creature to affirm. It is safer to determine this point by the fact, as related in scripture, than, with the Aristotelians of old, to lay down *a hypothesis*, or supposition *of our own*, and, *taking it for granted*, endeavour *to accommodate to it* this particular fact. Attending then to this fact, and to what is recorded of it, I must once more declare, that however the apostles acted in *other* references, when they supplied the place of the New-Testament scriptures, they do not appear to have acted by inspiration in the present instance. The decision which they pronounced, seems to have been the fruit of their examination of the Old-Testament scriptures, and attention to some former miracles which had been wrought, and not of any supernatural suggestion. At the same time, it is granted that in other instances where inspiration was necessary, they would act under its influence, and be guided by its dictates. Your attempt to shew that if inspiration had been requisite, Paul was not sufficient to have determined the controversy, was considered in the preceding Letter.

Your last, however, is your favourite argument, for you say, p. 44. "What has always appeared to me the "most decisive proof that this passage affords no coun- "tenance to modern Presbytery, arises from the issue of "the decision the church at Jerusalem pronounced, on "the question that was laid before them. They not "only send their decision to Antioch, but to Syria and "Cilicia, ver. 23.; and we learn from chap. xvi. ver. 4. "when Paul and Silas went out on Paul's second jour- "ney, they delivered in the different cities the decrees

" for to keep, that were ordained of the apoſtles and " elders which were at Jeruſalem. Here, thoſe who " ſupport Preſbytery from this paſſage, ſeem inextricably " involved in a dilemma. It muſt be allowed theſe " decrees were either binding or not. If they were not, " then the whole was merely an application for advice, " and the paſſage has no connection with Preſbyterial " authority. If they were binding, then it follows that " the church at Jeruſalem ordained decrees which were " obligatory not only on the church at Antioch, but on " every other church in the Chriſtian world, though " they had not the ſhadow of a repreſentative in that " meeting where the decrees were formed. Surely this " puts it beyond the poſſibility of a doubt that the caſe " was an extraordinary one, and conſequently forms no " precedent for other churches. If it was not extra- " ordinary, let us ſee to what it will lead. It ought " then to be imitated; that is, one church ſhould frame " decrees to which it is entitled to require obedience " from every other church in the Chriſtian world. " What church is entitled to claim ſuch a prerogative?— " But it is unneceſſary to purſue the argument farther, as " the inference implies what is impracticable and abſurd."

To the formidable argument founded on this dilemma I would briefly ſtate, that, I apprehend, Preſbyterians may ſafely grant that an authoritative power was exerciſed by this aſſembly, and yet none of your momentous conſequences will follow. What though its decrees were binding upon Syria, and Cilicia, and Lyſtra, and Iconium, as well as Antioch, will it ever be proved from this, that they were the dictate of inſpiration? No, verily. Were there not apoſtles in this council, as has been already ſaid, who, acting even in their uninſpired capacity, were univerſal paſtors, and had a right to ordain decrees which were binding upon all the churches on earth, as well as to preach to all of them, as ordinary miniſters,

according as opportunity offered? How, of courſe, can it be demonſtrated from the univerſally obligatory power of the decrees that they muſt have been ſupernaturally ſuggeſted, when the apoſtles, who were members of the aſſembly which paſſed them, even as *uninſpired miniſters*, had a right to deliver them not only to theſe, but to all other churches? Neither, then, from this, nor any other circumſtance, does it appear that the deciſion which was pronounced by this council was an inſpired deciſion, or that the members of it were guided by any ſuperior influence than their own judgment and prudence, and the common aids of the ſacred Spirit.

Is it ſaid, that no power properly juridical was aſſumed by this aſſembly, and that therefore no precedent can be pleaded from it for the power of modern courts of review? It is replied, that the power of determining what was to be preached as the means of ſalvation was claimed by it, than which, undoubtedly, none can be conſidered as a higher or more important exerciſe of authority. Their determination, moreover, as has been noticed, is called a decree, and the very fact of their paſſing ſuch a decree, implied in them the power alſo of puniſhing all who refuſed to ſubmit to it. But if this is not to be conſidered as eccleſiaſtical power, I know not what is entitled to the name.

Thus, I conceive, the three general poſitions have in ſome meaſure been eſtabliſhed. *Firſt*, That there was a court at Jeruſalem of Chriſtian miniſters, who ſat and determined in a reference which was made to them from another court at Antioch: *Secondly*, That this court at Jeruſalem delivered not merely to that at Antioch a general advice, but an authoritative deciſion: And *thirdly*, That, in this deciſion, they ſeem neither to have been directed by miraculous ſuggeſtion nor extraordinary ſuperintendence, but by the uſual aids of the ſacred Spirit, which are common to faithful miniſters in every age.

If this however was the caſe, and a court at Antioch was ſubject to the review of a court at Jeruſalem, is it not a clear and ſufficient warrant for thoſe courts of review which exiſt among Preſbyterians? It muſt certainly be of little importance to object that this court at Jeruſalem did not reſemble a Preſbytery or Synod, ſince it was unqueſtionably compoſed of miniſters of Chriſt acting in an ordinary and common capacity, and different from thoſe from whom the reference was preſented. This, I preſume, is the grand point in diſpute; and ſince it is eſtabliſhed, it authorizes, I apprehend, courts of review to any extent that the circumſtances of the church may be found to require. If *the principle* of the ſubordination of courts be demonſtrated, it is evident that for the ſame reaſon that it is proper to ſubject the rulers of a particular congregation to the review of a Preſbytery, if the deciſion of the Preſbytery is not ſatisfactory, it is lawful and deſirable to refer it to the determination of a greater number of miniſters, met as a Synod, or to a ſtill greater number, as an Aſſembly.

With regard to the ſentiments of the primitive church, a diverſity of opinions has exiſted. Mr. Ewing has quoted, in proof of their Independency, an unſubſtantiated aſſertion of Moſheim, without a ſingle document to confirm it *. In oppoſition to this however, were we to abide merely by the reports of the learned, it might be ſufficient, on this point, to refer Independents to the authority of Lord King, whom they ſo much commend, and who, in his Inquiry into the Conſtitution of the Primitive Church, part i. chap. viii. has not merely, like Moſheim, aſſerted, but fully proved, that courts of review, in the early ages, were common in the church. Many others alſo might be mentioned as of ſimilar ſentiments. Few inſtances indeed can be adduced of Preſ-

* See Appendix to his Lecture, p. 90.

byteries or Synods before the time of Cyprian. But for this a very ſatisfactory reaſon can be aſſigned. Moſt of the writings of the fathers, before that period, are loſt; and in the few which remain, the only hints which are delivered reſpecting the government of the church are entirely incidental. "The reaſon," ſays King, p. 148. "why we find not more *Synodical decrees* of the three "firſt centuries, comes not, from that they judicially "determined none, or required not the obſervance of "them; but from that, either they were not careful, "or the fury and violence of the times would not permit "them, to tranſmit them down to their ſucceſſors; or "through the length of time they are loſt, and ſcarce "any thing beſides the names of ſuch Synods are now "remembered, and of multitudes, neither names nor "decrees are to be found. But yet there is enough "eſcaped the fury of perſecution, and the length of time, "to convince that thoſe Synods did decree thoſe things "which they judged expedient for the polity, diſcipline, "and government of thoſe particular churches that "were within their reſpective provinces, and required "them to be obſerved by all the members thereof." Beſides, as, on a former part of the ſubject, it was ſhewn that Independents have never been able to adduce any plauſible proof, of the right of the people at large to judge and vote in church-buſineſs, from the writings of the fathers prior to the time of Cyprian; how can they object to quotations from this their favourite author, which Preſbyterians bring forward, to prove the ſubordination of judicatories in eccleſiaſtical government?

In reviewing the writings of the fathers, we find that they acknowledge that ſuch courts of review exiſted in the church from the earlieſt period. Cyprian, for inſtance, in his Sixty-ſixth Epiſtle, written, according to the calculation of Marſhall, A. D. 249, not only ſpeaks of a Synod and its authoritative decrees, but repreſents

theſe as having obtained among his more ancient predeceſſors. " Graviter commoti ſumus ego et collegæ mei " qui præſentes aderant, et compreſbyteri noſtri qui " nobis aſſidebant, fratres cariſſimi, cum cognoviſſemus " quod Geminius Victor, frater noſter, de ſeculo excedens, " Geminium Fauſtinum preſbyterum tutorem teſtamento " ſuo nominaverit, cum *jam pridem in concilio epiſcoporum* " ſtatutum ſit, ne quis de clericis et Dei miniſtris tutorem " vel curatorem teſtamento ſuo conſtituat:" *i. e.* " It " was a great concern to me and to my colleagues who " happened to be preſent with me, and to our fellow- " preſbyters who ſat in judgment along with us, when " we learned that our brother Geminius Victor, at his " death, had appointed Geminius Fauſtinus, a preſbyter, " executor of his will, ſince it hath *long ago* been " determined in *a Council* or *Synod of biſhops*, that no one " ſhould nominate in his will, a clergyman, or a miniſter " of God, to be an executor, or a guardian." And again, as a proof that this Synod was not merely conſultative, after making ſome obſervations upon the neceſſity of requiring the miniſters of the church to devote themſelves entirely to their ſacred function, he adds, " Quod " epiſcopi anteceſſores noſtri religioſe conſiderantes, et " ſalubriter providentes, cenſuerunt ne quis frater excedens " ad tutelam vel curam clericum nominaret; ac ſi qui " hoc faceret, non offerretur pro eo, nec ſacrificium pro " dormitione ejus celebraretur, neque enim apud altare " Dei nominari meretur in ſacerdotum prece, qui ab " altari ſacerdotes et miniſtros voluit avocare. Et ideo " Victor cum contra formam nuper in concilio a ſacerdo- " tibus datam, Geminium Fauſtinum preſbyterum auſus " ſit tutorem conſtituere, non eſt quod pro dormitione " ejus apud vos fiat oblatio, aut deprecatio aliqua nomine " ejus in eccleſiæ frequentetur, ut ſacerdotum decretum " religioſe et neceſſarie factum ſervetur a nobis, ſimul et " cæteris fratribus detur exemplum, ne quis ſacerdotes

" et miniſtros Dei, altari ejus, et eccleſiæ vacantes ad " ſeculares moleſtias devocet." That is, " Which the " biſhops, our predeceſſors, religiouſly conſidering, de- " creed that no brother, at his death, ſhould name a " clergyman an executor to his will; and if any one " ſhould do ſo, there ſhould be no offering for him, nor " ſacrifice preſented for his repoſe, for he who would " call off from the altar its prieſts and miniſters, does " not deſerve to be mentioned in the prayers of the " prieſt at the altar. Wherefore ſince Victor, againſt the " canon which was lately delivered upon this occaſion in " a council of biſhops, has preſumed to appoint Geminius " Fauſtinus, a preſbyter, his executor, there is no reaſon " why an oblation ſhould be offered for his repoſe, nor " the cuſtomary prayers of the church preſented on his " behalf, both that this *Synodical decree* may be obſerved " by us, and an example may be given to the reſt of " our brethren, that no perſon may call to a ſecular " employment the prieſts and miniſters of God, whoſe " whole time and care ſhould be devoted to his altar."

Another of theſe authoritative Synods or Councils is mentioned by Cyprian, in a paſſage formerly quoted from his Sixty-ſeventh Epiſtle. Speaking of Novatian, he ſays, " Et cum ad nos in Africam legatos miſiſſit, " optans ad communicationem noſtram admitti, hinc *a* " *concilio plurimorum ſacerdotum* qui præſentes eramus ſen- " tentiam retulerit, ſe foris eſſe cœpiſſe, nec poſſe a " quoquam noſtrum ſibi communicari," *&c. : i. e.* " And " when he had ſent his meſſengers to us in Africa, de- " ſiring to be admitted to our communion, he received " this ſentence *from a Council* of many miniſters who " were then aſſembled, that he had begun the rupture, " and could not be admitted by any of us to our com- " munion." Here we ſee a Council or Synod, of *many miniſters*, exerciſing an authoritative power over all the churches to which they belonged, and decreeing that

this man ſhould not be received into their communion. And again, in the ſame Epiſtle, talking of wicked and arrogant men, he ſays, " Ex quibus cum Marcianus eſſe " cœperit, et ſe Novatiano conjungens, adverſarius " miſericordiæ et pietatis extiterit: ſententiam non " dicat, ſed accipiat, nec ſic agat, quaſi ipſe judicaverit " *de collegio ſacerdotum*, quando ipſe ſit ab univerſis ſacer- " dotibus judicatus:" *i. e.* " Since Marcian hath begun " to be one of theſe, and joining himſelf to Nova- " tian, hath proved himſelf to be an enemy to mercy " and piety, let him not pretend to pronounce any " ſentence, but let him receive it; nor let him be- " have like one who is to judge *the whole college of* " *biſhops*, ſince he himſelf has been judged by all of " them." Here he ſpeaks of a whole college of paſtors as pronouncing ſentence of excommunication upon a heretic; and if we attend to another paſſage in this Epiſtle, we ſhall ſee that the college included the miniſters of many churches. " Therefore," ſays he, " dear " brother, *the very numerous body* of miniſters is ſo united, " that if any of our college become heretical, the reſt " aſſiſt, and, like good and compaſſionate ſhepherds, " gather the ſheep of the Lord into his fold." " Idcirco " enim, frater cariſſime, *copioſum corpus eſt ſacerdotium* " concordiæ mutuæ glutino atque unitatis vinculo copu- " latum ut ſi ex collegio noſtro hæreſin facere," *&c.*

In his Fifty-ninth Epiſtle likewiſe, addreſſed to Fidus, and ſubſcribed by Cyprian, and ſixty-ſix miniſters who had ſat in council with him, he ſpeaks of a decree which they had made, and which was conſidered as binding by all the churches to which they belonged. And at the ſame time they find fault with one Therapius, becauſe, in oppoſition to their decree, he had raſhly reſtored to the communion of the church, Victor, a preſbyter, before he had exhibited ſufficient evidences of penitence; and ſay, that though they might have inflicted upon

Therapius a higher punishment, they would content themselves with a reproof and admonition. "Legimus "(says Cyprian to Fidus), literas tuas, frater carissime, "quibus significasti de Victore quodam presbytero, "quod ei, antequam pœnitentiam plenam egisset, et "Domino Deo, in quem deliquerat, satisfeciisset, temere "Therapius collega noster immaturo tempore et præ-"propera festinatione pacem dederit. Quæ res nos satis "movit, receſſum esse a decreti nostri auctoritate, ut ante "legitimum, et plenum tempus satisfactionis, pax ei "concederetur. Sed librato apud nos diu consilio, *satis* "fuit objurgare Therapium collegam nostrum, quod "temere hoc fecerit, et instruxisse, ne quid tale de cætero "faciat." That is, "We have perused your Letter, "dearest brother, wherein you intimate to us the case "of Victor, once a presbyter, whom our colleague "Therapius rashly admitted before he had exhibited "sufficient marks of penitence, and made satisfaction to "that God against whom he had offended. Which "circumstance troubled us not a little, because, over-"looking *the authority of our decree*, he had been restored "to communion before the lawful term of satisfaction "had expired. But having long and fully considered "the matter, we resolved *to content ourselves* with repri-"manding our colleague Therapius for his precipitate "conduct, and with admonishing him to guard against "such measures for the future."

This same council, moreover, which had thus authoritatively determined respecting the time during which offenders should be suspended from the communion of the church before they were re-admitted, pronounces, at the same time, a decision respecting the time at which infants should be baptized. "Quantum vero (says Cyprian) "ad causam infantium pertinet, quos dixisti intra "secundum vel tertium diem, quo nati sunt, constitutos "baptizari non oportere, et considerandum esse legem

" circumciſionis antiquæ, ut intra octavum diem eum qui " natus eſt baptizandum et ſacrificandum non putares; " longe aliud in concilio noſtro omnibus viſum eſt. In " hoc enim quod tu putabas eſſe faciendum, nemo con- " ſenſit, ſed univerſi potius judicavimus nulli hominum " nato miſericordiam Dei et gratiam denegandam." That is, " Now, as to the caſe of new-born infants, who " ſhould not, according to your opinion, be baptized with- " in the ſecond or third day after their birth, but ſhould " rather wait the time appointed by the law for circumci- " ſion, and ſo not be baptized nor devoted to the ſervice " of God till the *eighth* day, I muſt tell you that we were " all here aſſembled in council, of another mind; and " no one of us came into your ſentiments; but on the " contrary, we all concluded, that the grace and mercies " of God were to be denied to none who ſhould come " into the world*." And afterwards they expreſs, if

* " The unanimity" (ſays Marſhall, in his Notes upon Cyprian, which I have juſt now ſeen) " wherewith this queſtion was " carried (at this early period of the church), ſhews that " infant-baptiſm, even at this time, was no novel uſage: there " was no manner of diſpute, whether infants ſhould be bap- " tized; but whether before the *eighth* day or not: to which " the unanimous reſolution was, that the grace of God ſhould be " denied *to none*." It is hoped that the reader, for the ſake of the obſervation, will pardon the little digreſſion contained in this note. And it is truſted that thoſe who are deſirous of aſcertaining the truth upon this ſubject, and have not an opportunity of peruſing the more laborious Treatiſes of Wall and Williams, will not be diſpleaſed with the author, if he recommend to their attention, at leaſt in ſupport of infant-baptiſm, the very ingenious pamphlet of Peter Edwards, who, for eleven years, was an Antipedobaptiſt miniſter, but renounced that connection; the Diſſertation of Pirie, and his Defence of that Diſſertation; the manly reaſoning of the late venerable Dr. Erſkine, in his Sermon upon that ſubject, in the ſecond volume of his Diſcourſes; and Three Sermons upon Baptiſm, by Dr. Lathrop of America, which, while they are peculiarly adapted, from their admirable perſpicuity, to the plaineſt

poſſible in ſtill ſtronger terms, their conviction that this ordinance ſhould be adminiſtered to infants at any period. This determination however appears to be as authoritative as their former deciſion, as to the caſe of the lapſed, and ſeems to have been equally binding upon all their churches.

Firmilian, biſhop of Ceſarea in Cappadocia, in the Latin tranſlation of his Letter, which Cyprian has given us among his own Epiſtles, affirms that ſuch Councils or Synods were common alſo at that time in the province of Leſſer Aſia. After telling us, as was before mentioned, that elders alone preſide in the church, and baptize and ordain, and that heretics are not entitled to perform theſe functions after they apoſtatize, he adds, "Quod totum "nos jampridem in Iconio, qui Phrygiæ locus eſt, collecti "in unum convenientibus ex Galatia, et Cilicia, et "cæteris proxime regionibus confirmavimus, tenendum "contra hæreticos firmiter et vindicandum :" *i. e.* "All "which many of us, aſſembled together in Iconium, a "city of Phrygia, from Galatia, Cilicia, and the neigh-"bouring regions, determined to maintain and aſſert "againſt the pretenſions of heretics*." And in another part of the ſame Epiſtle he informs us, that they had at leaſt an annual meeting of this authoritative Synod or Council. "Qua ex cauſa (ſays he) neceſſario "apud nos fit, ut *per ſingulos annos* ſeniores et præpoſiti

readers, from the ſolidity of reaſoning and acuteneſs of judgment which they diſcover, are worthy of the peruſal of the moſt enlightened. Theſe Diſcourſes have lately been republiſhed in Scotland, and ſell for a trifle.

* "Dionyſius of Alexandria," ſays Marſhall, "in his Third "Epiſtle on Baptiſm, as repreſented to us by Euſebius, book vii. "chap. vii. tells Philemon, to whom he wrote, that the Africans "were not the firſt introducers of baptizing heretics; but that "the biſhops, aſſembled at *Iconium* and Synnada, had long before "determined the queſtion"—which, too, proves that this council was authoritative.

" in unum conveniamus ad disponenda ea quæ curæ " nostræ commissa sunt:" *i. e.* " Wherefore we find it " necessary that our elders and rulers assemble every " year, for settling those things which are committed " to our care." Epist. lxxv.

In fine, omitting the accounts of many other Synods, which might easily be produced from the writings of Cyprian, we are informed by Eusebius, in his Ecclesiastical History, book vii. chap. xxix. that, in the reign of Aurelian, a Synod of many ministers met at Antioch, and excommunicated Paul of Samosatena from their different churches. " Καθ' ὃν (says he) τελευταιας " συγκροτηθεισης πλειςων ὁσων επισκοπων συνοδου, φωραθεις και " προς ἁπαντων ἠδη σαφως καταγνωσθεις ἑτεροδοξιαν ὁ της κατα " αντιοχειαν αἱρεσεως αρχηγος της ὑπο τον ουρανον καθολικης " εκκλησιας αποκηρυττεται." And in this Synod we are told, in the preceding chapter, that there were, among others, Firmilian, bishop of Cæsarea, now mentioned; Gregory and Athenodorus, brothers, pastors of churches in Pontus; Helenus, minister of the church at Tarsis; and Nicomas, minister of the church in Iconium; with Hymeneus, bishop of Jerusalem; Theotecnus, bishop of Cesarea in Palestine, near Jerusalem; and Maximus, bishop of Bostra. Thus, then, it appears that authoritative courts, superior to the governors of a particular congregation, are not only clearly authorized by reason as necessary and useful, and sanctioned by scripture as divinely appointed, but existed even in the earliest period of the Christian church; and consequently that the scheme for which Independents contend is not less contrary to the representations of antiquity, than it seems to be to reason and scripture.

I have now finished what I intended when I began these Letters—a Vindication of the Presbyterian plan of church-government. That I have refuted all the arguments or objections of Independents I do not pretend, for as each of

their congregations is unconnected with the reſt in point of adminiſtration, there may be *as many eccleſiaſtical conſtitutions*, and *as many diverſities of ſentiment* with regard to government among them, as there are congregations. But who would profeſs to detail or examine the whole of theſe ſyſtems? Beſides, as it is another of the principles of moſt of our modern Independents, that written confeſſions, exhibiting their view of the meaning of ſcripture, are unlawful, it is extremely difficult to aſcertain the tenets even of a few of them, on this, or any other point of doctrine. This principle certainly has its own advantages, and muſt be particularly ſuitable to the plan of thoſe who are frequently changing their religious ſentiments. It is extremely diſadvantageous however to the public at large, who can have no certain way of diſcovering their tenets, while, in another point of view, it is no leſs injurious to themſelves, as it frequently obliges the moſt impartial inquirers to commit involuntary miſtakes in attempting to ſtate their principles. If, in the preceding pages therefore, there be any miſtakes with regard to the ſentiments of Independents, it is again requeſted that they may not be aſcribed to a deſign wilfully to diſtort or miſrepreſent them. Againſt this, as far as the author was aware, he has endeavoured to guard, and he ſhould be ſorry indeed, if, in the view which he has delivered of any doctrine or argument, he had yielded to its influence in the ſlighteſt degree. And conſcious as he is that he has attempted, as far as he could aſcertain the truth reſpecting their principles, to know and to ſtate it, if, in any inſtance, he has erred, he muſt beg leave, without any intention invidiouſly to ſneer at this particular principle, to ſet it down to the account of their wanting any public and written confeſſion—a peculiarity however which may be followed, at leaſt in the conviction of Independents, with advantages which will more than compenſate ſuch evils.

APPENDIX I.

ON THE

JEWISH SYNAGOGUES & SANHEDRIN.

TO the argument from the conſtitution and proceedings of the Jewiſh Synagogue and Sanhedrin, illuſtrated in Letter VI. it has been objected that they were merely human inventions, not introduced till after the Babyloniſh captivity, and therefore could not be deſigned as a pattern to Chriſtian churches. That they were introduced only at this period, is a point which has been warmly, and with conſiderable plauſibility, conteſted by many diſtinguiſhed eccleſiaſtical writers of antiquity.

It is highly probable however, that ſynagogues, to a certain degree, were coeval with the ſettlement of the Iſraelites in Judea. It was the office of many of the Levites, who were exempted from agriculture and other ſecular employments, and were diſperſed through the various diſtricts of the land, not only to offer ſacrifices, but to inſtruct the people in the truths of religion; for this maxim is mentioned by Malachi, chap. ii. 7. as eſtabliſhed in every age of their church, that "the prieſt's "lips ſhould keep knowledge, and they ſhould ſeek the "law at his mouth; for he was the meſſenger of the "Lord of hoſts." But how could they ſo conveniently communicate this inſtruction as by collecting the people into ſynagogues or aſſemblies? It would ſeem alſo, that without ſome ſuch convocation or aſſembly, from the very beginning, the Sabbath could not have been obſerved by them; for it is expreſsly ſaid, Lev. xxiii. 3. that the Sabbath was to the Iſraelites a holy convoca-

tion, or for a holy convocation, in or among all their dwellings. If no such convocation was observed then, throughout the whole nation, till after the captivity, there was no public worship except at Jerusalem—a circumstance which must appear highly extraordinary, when we reflect that they were the only visible church of God in existence at that period. Nor will it be easy to account for the following description of the ravages of the enemies of the Jews, probably at the time of the captivity: "They have destroyed all the synagogues of God "in the land," כל מועדי־ אל בארץ, Psal. lxxiv. 8. where, says a respectable critic, not only מועדי from יעד, *convenire fecit ad locum tempusque statutum*, is properly translated synagogues, in which the people were statedly to meet for religious worship, but the words כל and בארץ, *all the synagogues—in the land*, being added, prevent us from explaining this expression, as some do, only of the temple, and holy places belonging to it, at Jerusalem.

Farther, as synagogues, however they might be altered after the captivity, appear to have existed many ages before; so, the sanhedrin, or court of seventy elders, though it also might be altered at this period, was most probably of much earlier origin. The learned Selden says, that nothing is more certain from the sacred scripture, than that it was instituted *the second* year after the children of Israel came out of Egypt. "Ita nihil certius "est quam eam, ut e scriptura diximus, anno exitus "secundo tribuendam *." He quotes also Archbishop Usher, Capellus, Perkins, Temporarius, Codomannus, Scaliger, Helvicus, Calvisius, Buntingius, Massæus, and many others of the most distinguished ecclesiastical antiquaries, as attributing to it an origin nearly similar. Lightfoot likewise, with Grotius, Lowman, and many of the most illustrious names in biblical literature, might

* Selden de Synedriis Hebræorum, p. 631.

here be adduced as of this opinion, together with a long list of Jewish doctors, as appears from their Talmuds.

The institution of this court seems plainly to be pointed out in Numb. xi. 16, 17. "And the Lord said unto "Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of "Israel, whom thou knowest to be elders of the people, "and officers over them; and bring them unto the "tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand "there with thee. And I will come down, and talk "with thee there: and I will take of the spirit which "is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they "shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that "thou bear it not thyself alone." "The general design "of the institution of these seventy," says the judicious Lowman, "was, as is here said, that *they might bear the* "*burden along with Moses*, that he might not bear it "alone. This sure cannot be meant of the common "and ordinary administration of justice, which had been "provided for just before in the Jethronian præfectures. "As far then as they were to assist Moses in matters "judiciary, it could only be in those greater matters, "which, as reserved causes, were to be brought before "Moses; or such difficult questions as were referred by "appeal from the inferior judges. In this sense, this "court of the seventy elders will be a constitution not "much unlike the (ancient) parliament of Paris, so far "as that was a court of law. But this was not the only "end for which this court was instituted. The imme-"diate occasion of its institution was the complaint of "Moses on the murmuring and sedition of the people "and the displeasure of God; that fire was sent to con-"sume them that were in the uttermost parts of the "camp. It is in answer to this complaint of Moses on "this occasion, that the Lord said, *Gather unto me seventy* "*men of the elders of Israel—that they may stand with thee;* "*and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee*, that

" thou bear it not thyſelf alone. We ſee plainly that " theſe ſeventy were to be co-adjutors to Moſes in his " councils, how to anſwer the people's complaints, and " to adviſe what would be beſt to do on all occaſions, " eſpecially of greater difficulty; to preſerve peace and " good order among the people, and to prevent thoſe " mutinies which would likely prove fatal to the whole " nation, if not remedied by ſome means or other. In " this view," he adds, " the ſeventy elders will appear " to be deſigned not only as a ſtanding court of law and " equity to aſſiſt Moſes as judge in cauſes of greater " conſequence, and in appeals, but to aſſiſt the judge " with their advice upon every occaſion; this was " properly to bear the burden of the people with Moſes, " that he might not bear it himſelf alone. For now the " judge would not bear all the envy or ill-will of the " people when diſſatisfied or uneaſy with any part of the " adminiſtration, for the common people, though they " know very little of the reaſons of any adminiſtration, " are yet apt to think every thing wrong that does not " pleaſe them, or which is attended with difficulties to " themſelves or the public. Now a council of ſeventy " perſons, of the moſt approved wiſdom and integrity, " would at leaſt ſhare this burden among them all, " inſtead of throwing the whole on one man. And it " would be moreover an eaſe to the judge's own mind, " and make him more reſolved in any council to be taken " or executed, when it ſhould be with the advice and " approbation of a multitude of counſellors, in which " there is wiſdom and ſafety. And, finally, it was " proper to give authority and reſpect to ſuch orders as " ſhould be made by advice of perſons whom the people " themſelves had approved and choſen as eminent for " their wiſdom and integrity. Conſider then this court " as a ſtanding ſenate always at hand, or as a conſtant " privy-council to the judge, and we have a moſt wiſe

" proviſion for the eaſier and better government of the " whole nation; and this will make a conſiderable part " of the ſtates-general of the united tribes*."

In this rational and maſterly account then of the ſeventy, we have not only an excellent view of the end of their inſtitution, but a very ſatisfactory proof of the neceſſity of their continuance in every ſubſequent age. If ſuch co-adjutors were neceſſary to Moſes for the ends here ſpecified, much more to the judges and kings who ſucceeded him, of whom none ſurpaſſed, and but few equalled him in knowlege and ſagacity. In this account too, as well as in the repreſentations of ſcripture, we have a complete refutation of the aſſertion of Vitringa†, that the ſeventy were intended not to judge, but merely to be witneſſes and inſpectors of the actions of Moſes, and, in this manner, prevent any odium which he might incur from any part of his work. " Nonne hoc commodiſſime " ita intelligitur, ut Moſen liberarent magna invidiæ " parte, ſuaque illa pluralitate, uti propiores actionum " Moſis teſtes illius modi murmurationes populi impe- " dirent aut compeſcerent?" What need was there that the Lord *ſhould take of the Spirit*, and give it to them for this purpoſe, if they were only deſigned to be witneſſes of his conduct? or could their performing the part of witneſſes amount to the full import of that very energetic expreſſion, of *bearing the burden of the people* along with him?

That this court might ſometimes be diſcontinued during the laxer periods of the Jewiſh government is indeed probable. It would be too much however, from this, to ſuppoſe that it totally ceaſed after the days of Moſes. There ſeems to be a ſtrong alluſion to it in Deut. xvii. 8, 9, 10. " If there ariſe a matter too hard " for thee in judgment, between blood and blood, be-

* Lowman's Civil Government of the Hebrews, p. 169.

† See his Diſſert. de Syned. Hebræor. p. 569.

" tween plea and plea, and between ſtroke and ſtroke, " being matters of controverſy within thy gates; then " ſhalt thou ariſe, and get thee up into the place which " the Lord thy God ſhall chooſe; and thou ſhalt come " unto the prieſts the Levites, and to the judge that " ſhall be in thoſe days, and inquire; and they ſhall ſhew " thee the ſentence of judgment. And thou ſhalt do " according to the ſentence which they of that place " (which the Lord ſhall chooſe) ſhall ſhew thee, and " thou ſhalt obſerve to do according to all that they " inform thee," &c. Now, that the prieſts and judge, here mentioned, could not be, as Vitringa ſuppoſes, only ordinary prieſts and judges, or ſingle perſons, is probable from this, that though prieſts and Levites reſided in every city, they were not competent to give the deciſion required; but the people, in whatever part of the land they lived, were to come up to Jeruſalem, and ſtrictly ſubmit to the determinations of the prieſts and judge there, under pain of the moſt dreadful penalties: ver. 11, 12. But if the prieſts and Levites competent to decide on theſe matters, were to be found at Jeruſalem only, they muſt certainly have been inveſted with extraordinary powers; and when we attend to what was before ſtated, it ſeems moſt likely that they were no other than the ſeventy elders, with the prieſt or judge who was their preſident. This court, in fine, though diſcontinued for a ſeaſon, prior to the reign of Jehoſhaphat, ſeems to have been revived by this prince; who deſcribes the object for which it was inſtituted, in almoſt the very terms uſed in Deuteronomy. By this court, alſo, Jeremiah was probably tried and acquitted: Jer. xxvi.

It is certainly not concluſive to argue, that becauſe the court of the ſeventy is not mentioned by that particular name after the days of Moſes, it muſt have ceaſed with him. It might as well be alleged, that though, from its being affirmed that in Chriſt there is neither male nor

female, women may be admitted to the Lord's fupper, yet as there is no account in the New Teftament of a woman partaking of this ordinance, no woman partook of it in the primitive church. It will be faid, perhaps, that the writings of the early fathers bear teftimony to this fact. But Jofephus, Philo, and Maimonides, who may properly be denominated the Jewifh Fathers, no lefs fully atteft the exiftence of this court. Or is it contended that fuch a court was certainly not in ufe in the days of the judges, becaufe it is faid, Judges xxi. 25. that "becaufe in thofe days there was no king in Ifrael, every "man did what was right in his own eyes?" We reply, that this court, according to the opinion of the accurate Lowman, being defigned only for the decifion of higher matters, and more difficult and intereffing controverfies, was not properly concerned with the common adminiftration of the laws of juftice; and that it might with more propriety be afferted that they had no judges at that time in the gates of their cities, to whom this belonged as their peculiar care, than that they had no fanhedrin, which was not immediately concerned in thefe matters. Yet we know from Deut. xvi. 18. that fuch judges were to be appointed by the Ifraelites, after their fettlement in Canaan, in every city, and fuch judges alfo we have reafon to believe they had at this very period.

We thus fee that the fynagogue and fanhedrin are not to be accounted mere human inventions. But even though it were granted that they were not introduced till after the Babyloniih captivity, it feems ftill to follow that if they were not founded upon a direct divine commandment, they were at leaft indirectly warranted and encouraged by the divine word. The inftitution of fynagogues was defigned for improving the people in the knowledge of the law, and was a fulfilment of the divine injunction, that fince the prieft's lips were to keep knowledge, they were to feek the law at his mouth.

Beſides which, as is proved in the preceding Letters, it received the approbation of Jeſus himſelf. And with regard to the ſanhedrin, it was evidently founded on the commandment of God to the Iſraelites (Deut. xvi. 18.), "to make to themſelves judges and officers in all the gates "of their cities, which the Lord their God gave them "throughout their tribes;" a commandment which appears to have authorized them not only to appoint as many judges in their particular cities as they found to be neceſſary, but alſo to eſtabliſh a *ſuperior* court of judges in their chief city, by which the ſentences of the inferior courts might be reviewed, and judgment pronounced in matters of peculiar difficulty or importance.

Do Independents further aſſert, that theſe were not eccleſiaſtical, but only civil courts, and, of courſe, that we are not entitled to argue from the government which obtained in them, to that which is to exiſt in the Chriſtian church? It is replied, that the ſynagogue being deſigned for the religious inſtruction of the people, and its privileges and puniſhments being ſpiritual (in ſo far as the Jewiſh œconomy admitted of this), it muſt have been principally, if not entirely, an eccleſiaſtical inſtitution. The reaſon why the blind man (John ix.) was caſt out of the ſynagogue, *viz.* his profeſſion of faith in Chriſt, was purely eccleſiaſtical: and our Saviour himſelf tells his diſciples, that the ſame puniſhment would be inflicted on them for a ſimilar fault. Nor is it leſs plain that the ſanhedrin, though it was empowered to take cognizance of civil, was appointed alſo to judge of eccleſiaſtical matters. Thoſe who appealed to it, were required to hearken to the prieſt as well as to the judge, Deut. xvii.; and when revived by Jehoſhaphat, 2 Chron. xix. it was authorized to determine *in the matters of the Lord* as well as in the king's matters. The account likewiſe of the manner in which excommunication was performed by them in a particular inſtance, as recorded

in Pirke Rabb. Eliefer, cap. xxxviii. ſhews that this ceremony, though attended ſometimes with the privation of civil rights, was alſo an eccleſiaſtical puniſhment. "Ezra, Zerobabel, and Joſhua," ſay the Jews, "aſſembled "the whole congregation in the temple of the Lord; "and they brought three hundred prieſts, three hun- "dred trumpets, and three hundred books of the law, "and as many boys; and they ſounded their trumpets; "and the Levites, ſinging, curſed the Samaritans in the "myſtery of the name Jehovah, and in the decalogue, "and with the curſe of the ſuperior houſe of judgment, "and likewiſe with the curſe of the inferior houſe of "judgment, that no Iſraelite ſhould eat the bread of the "Samaritans, that no proſelyte ſhould be received from "them, and that they ſhould have no part *in the reſur- "rection of the dead.*" "Quid tum fecerunt Ezra, Zero- "babel et Jehoſhua? Congregaverunt totam eccleſiam ſeu "cætum populi in templum Domini et introduxerunt "trecentos ſacerdotes, et trecentos adoleſcentes (ſeu "diſcipulos minores) quibus erant in manibus trecentæ "buccinæ, et trecenti libri legis. Hi clangebant; Le- "vitæ autem cantabant et pſallebant; et excommunica- "bant Cuthæos per myſterium nominis Tetragrammati, "et per ſcripturam deſcriptam in tabulis legis, et per "anathema fori ſuperioris ſeu cœleſtis, et per anathema "fori inferioris ſeu terreſtris, ita ut nemo Iſraeli- "tarum unquam in poſterum comederet buccellam "aliquam Cuthæorum. Hinc dicunt quicunque come- "dit carnem Cuthæi, is veſcitur quaſi carne porcina "Cuthæus quoque ne fieret proſelytus, neque haberet "partem in reſurrectione mortuorum, juxta illud quod "ſcriptum eſt, *Non ad vos ſimul nobiſcum attinet inſtaura- "tio domus Dei noſtri:* neque in hoc neque in futuro "ſeculo." Buxtorf, too, explains the ejection from their ſynagogues to be a caſting out from their holy aſſemblies, and as correſponding to the excommunication

ſpoken of in 1 Cor. v. which ſurely muſt have been the act of an eccleſiaſtical court *. Selden makes it imply at leaſt an excluſion from fellowſhip in holy aſſemblies, and conſiders it as equivalent to that excommunication which, according to Tertullian, exiſted in his days in the Chriſtian church †. Ludovicus Capellus, in his Specilegio upon John ix. 22. affirms that the Jewiſh excommunication by *Niddui* was an eccleſiaſtical cenſure, and excluded from a communion in holy things, and inſinuates the ſame of the other modes of excommunication. Goodwin, in his Moſes and Aaron, book v. chap. i. ſpeaking of the Jewiſh eccleſiaſtical court, ſays, that to the members of it belonged the power of excommunication, and that it was a repreſentative church. "Hence," ſays he, "is that (Matth. xviii. 17.) *dic eccleſiæ*— "tell the church." The famous Bertram, moreover, in his book de Repub. Hebræor. lib. vii. thinks that the Jewiſh excommunication by *Niddui* was ſimilar to our ſuſpenſion from the ſacrament, and that their excommunication by *Cherem* anſwered to our excommunication from the church. And Grotius, in his Annotations on Luke vi. 22. affirms that their excommunication reſembled that of the ancient Druids, who excluded thoſe who were under it from the public ſacrifices—"inter- "dixerunt ſacrificiis." On the whole, it may be remarked that in the twenty-four caſes in which excommunication was inflicted (mentioned by Buxtorf, Lexicon, p. 1304. 1305.—Selden de Jure Nat. et Gentium, lib. iv. cap. viii.—and Joh. Coch. in his Annotations in Excerpt. Gem. Sanhedrin, cap. ii. p. 147.), there were ſeveral in which not only civil and external injuries, but religious ſcandals, were the reaſon of their infliction. One

* See his Lexicon Chald. Talmud. et Rabbin. edit. 1639, p. 827. 828.

† See his Treatiſe de Jure Nat. et Gentium, lib. iv. cap. ix.

cauſe, was *the deſpiſing of any of the precepts of the law of Moſes*, or ſtatutes of the Scribes; another, *the mentioning of the name of God raſhly*, or a *vain oath;* another, the tempting of others, or preſenting to them occaſion *to profane the name of God;* another, making them *to eat holy things without the temple;* another, the preventing of them *from fulfilling the commandments;* another, *a preſenting a profane offering*, according to Buxtorf, or *a ſickly animal*, according to Coch.; another, a prieſt's *not ſeparating the gifts of an oblation*, &c.; in all of which inſtances, as well as others which might be ſtated, it is plain that it was not civil injuries, but religious ſcandals, that were the grounds of the excommunication, and conſequently that the ſynagogue and ſanhedrin, which pronounced this excommunication, muſt certainly be viewed as eccleſiaſtical courts.

Thus, then, it appears that the ſynagogue and ſanhedrin, whatever connection they might have in another view with civil matters, muſt be conſidered as eccleſiaſtical courts—that they were inſtituted, if not upon explicit divine warrant, yet with the expreſs permiſſion and approbation of the Deity—and that the alluſion of our Saviour, in Matth. xviii. to theſe Jewiſh courts, whatever of them is intended, fully warrants the deduction of Preſbyterians from this paſſage, that ſimilar courts ſhould exiſt alſo in the Chriſtian church, and the government be veſted in their hands, unleſs it can be proved from other paſſages, that it is not merely eccleſiaſtical rulers in particular, but the members of every Chriſtian congregation in general, who are now to govern the church of God.

APPENDIX II.

REMARKS ON A VIEW OF SOCIAL WORSHIP, &c.

BY

JAMES ALEXANDER HALDANE.

SINCE the preceding Vindication of Preſbytery was written, a book, by the author now mentioned, has been publiſhed in defence of Independency. Expecting to find in it an abler or at leaſt a fuller defence of the principles which are here controverted than is contained in the publications of Meſſrs Innes or Ewing, I read it with avidity, but muſt confeſs that I have been completely diſappointed. For any additional argument which it brings forward, it might, as far as I can judge, have remained unpubliſhed, without any material injury either to the reputation of the author, to the inſtruction of the world, or to the particular cauſe which it meant to ſerve. It abounds with profeſſions of candour, of the moſt liberal charity, and of the moſt ſerious and diſintereſted regard for truth. And yet while Mr. Haldane avowedly examines Preſbytery *in general*, and points out the evils which he thinks reſult from it, he almoſt uniformly improves it into a pretext for haranguing, chiefly againſt our Eſtabliſhed Church, and for exhorting her members to renounce her communion. Were there not other churches however, as the Relief, and Burgher, and Antiburgher, which are equally zealous in ſupporting Preſbytery, and which, of courſe, equally merited his cenſure? How

comes it then, that, in his impartial and unbiaſſed repreſentation of truth, the evils which he ſuppoſes neceſſarily to reſult from this ſcheme *in general*, ſhould be urged, with ſuch zeal, as reaſons for ſeparation, only from *our* Preſbyterian church? Is the very ſame plan worſe when found in *the Church of Scotland* than in other ſocieties? Beſides, if he was induced by any particular reaſons to be peculiarly zealous againſt this Church, why did he not uniformly guard againſt miſrepreſentations, and ſtrictly adhere to that truth for which he ſo frequently profeſſes his regard?

Of the juſtice of this ſtricture, I ſhall at preſent mention one inſtance, taken from a Note, p. 409. "Every one," ſays he, "who dies in the communion of the Church of "England is committed to the grave as a dear brother, "of whoſe reſurrection certain hope is expreſſed. Al- "though this is not the form in Scotland, yet *the ſpirit* "*of the conſtitution is the ſame.* All are Chriſtians, and "conſequently all go to heaven." Now, let me aſk Mr. Haldane on what ground he reſts his aſſertion, that the conſtitution of our church on this point, is the ſame with that of the Church of England; or that it is one of the articles of its conſtitution, that all within its pale are Chriſtians, and conſequently that all of them go to heaven? Is it not an opinion which ſhe has uniformly and publicly held, that neither in *her* communion, nor in that of any church upon earth, are all Chriſtians, nor will all go to heaven; for if in the little company of the twelve apoſtles there was one traitor, will there not be many ſuch in more numerous ſocieties? And does ſhe not in her Confeſſion of Faith, chap. xxix. ſect. viii. expreſsly delineate, in terms which completely contradict his aſſertion, the character of thoſe who are worthy communicants, and ſhall finally be ſaved? "Although "*ignorant* and *wicked men* receive the outward elements in "this ſacrament," (and here it is plainly ſuppoſed that

they may receive them in her communion as well as in that of other churches) " yet they receive not the thing " ſignified thereby; but, by their unworthy coming " thereunto, are guilty of the body and blood of the " Lord, to their own damnation. Wherefore all *ignorant* " and *ungodly perſons*, as they are unfit to enjoy com- " munion with him, ſo they are unworthy of the Lord's " table, and cannot, without great ſin againſt Chriſt, " while they remain ſuch, partake of theſe holy myſteries, " or be admitted thereunto." Since it is affirmed then, in this and other paſſages, that ignorant and ungodly men may be found in her communion, and that ſuch are utterly unfit to partake of the ſupper, and conſequently no leſs unfit for heaven, how could this writer, when conſcious of theſe facts, ſo confidently aſſert that it is the ſpirit of her conſtitution, " that all who die in her " connection go to heaven, and that of their happy re- " ſurrection no doubt can be entertained ?"

It is remarkable alſo, that when he profeſſes to be *very ſeriouſly* ſearching after truth, and to preſent us with the evidence on both ſides of the queſtion, he ſhould amuſe himſelf and the reader with a ſilly and trifling ſneer, while he paſſes very ſlightly over any thing like argument. This is particularly the caſe in p. 166. where he introduces a ſtale and inappoſite witticiſm of Dr. Hardy, late Eccleſiaſtical Profeſſor in the Univerſity of Edinburgh. " He " was in the uſe," ſays he, " of telling his ſtudents, " that Synod-ſermons uſed formerly to be divided into " four heads, proving the divine right, 1. Of Kirk- " ſeſſions—2. Of Preſbyteries—3. Of Synods—4. Of " General Aſſemblies.—What a pity, ſaid he, that the " preachers ſhould have forgot to have proved the divine " right of the Committees of Overtures and Bills!!" Now, on this it may be remarked that Independents can no more prove the divine right of their Committees, who inquire into the knowledge and character of any appli-

cant for membership, than Presbyterians can establish, from explicit expressions, the divine right of the Committees of Overtures and Bills. Dr. Hardy's sneer therefore, if at all just, must fall with equal force upon these Independent Committees. Besides, as we have already attempted to shew that Kirk-sessions, Presbyteries, Synods, and General Assemblies, are authorized by scripture, and as Committees of Bills and Overtures consist only of certain members from the former, who are to prepare the business for more prompt decision—as the scripture enjoins also, that all things be done decently and in order, and as this plan appears often to be best fitted for this end, what is there either ridiculous or reprehensible in the adoption of it? Independents themselves, as was now said, appoint Committees, though no such institutions be specified in scripture, and why may not these Presbyterian Committees be likewise nominated, if conducive to the purposes of general utility. It would certainly therefore have been more beneficial, had Mr. Haldane, instead of quoting this very feeble witticism, at least, endeavoured, to answer a few more of the arguments produced in favour of Presbytery, and to state some more forcible reasons in support of Independency.

In p. 54. he quotes with applause the words of one who says, that he adores the fulness of scripture; and then adds, "This fulness, respecting *every thing* connected "with religion, will be more evident the better we "understand it. When we come to speak of the order "and discipline of the first churches, I hope it will "appear that no case *can* occur in a church of Christ "concerning which we have not sufficient directions in "the New Testament. These directions do not exclude "the exercise of prudence and discretion. Wisdom is "necessary to apply the laws of Christ properly; but "to use our wisdom in the application of laws, is widely "different from assuming a right to add to, or to alter

"them." Now, if it is here insinuated that *every* practice in a church of Christ must be enjoined by scripture in explicit terms, the assertion is inadmissible, because it supposes what is not only utterly impracticable, but contradictory to the acknowledged principles both of Presbyterians and Independents. Is every part either of the order or worship in the churches of the latter expressly prescribed in the sacred volume? Is there any passage, as was now stated, that appoints a committee of the members of the church to examine the knowledge and character of any person who applies for membership? or does it appear that this was done in any of the churches which are mentioned in the New Testament? Is there any passage which authorizes Independents to sing hymns, or paraphrases of scripture, in addition to the version of the Psalms of David? We are indeed exhorted by Paul, Col. iii. 16. as Mr Haldane observes, p. 303. to sing in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, but nothing certain can be deduced from this in support of that practice, for as all these names are applicable to the Psalms of David, many of which are hymns and spiritual songs, the apostle, for aught that can be ascertained from this place, might refer only to them *. Omitting other practices which might be mentioned, is there any passage which requires Christians always to stand while they sing? Mr. Haldane indeed says, p. 304. that praise is an immediate address to God? But so also is prayer; yet, like our Saviour, we may certainly either stand and lift up our eyes to heaven, or fall upon our faces to the ground, or, like Paul, bow our knees to our God and Father. It is indeed farther said, that Israel was exhorted to *stand up* and bless the Lord their God: Neh. ix. 5. It appears how-

* It is not intended by this to deny the propriety of singing such paraphrases, but only to shew that there is no express warrant for the use of them from scripture.

ever from what follows, that what the Iſraelites did when they ſtood up *at that time*, was to offer up a prayer, and not merely to ſing a pſalm. Compare Neh. ix. from ver. 6. to the end. At any rate, the contrary will not be eaſily proved. What argument then can be deduced for this practice of Independents from the preſent paſſage? Is it alleged notwithſtanding, as is done by Mr. Haldane, that it is plain from Pſal. cxxxiv. 1. that the Iſraelites muſt have ſtood when they ſang to God? It is remarked in return, that it is evident from ver. 2. that it is the duty of prayer, and not of praiſe, which is there repreſented to be required from them: "*Lift up* "*your hands* in the ſanctuary," it is ſaid, "and bleſs the "Lord." It is ſaid, moreover, that it is undeniable from Pſal. cxxxv. 1, 2, 3. that the Iſraelites ſtood up when they ſang praiſes to God; for they "who ſtood in the "houſe of the Lord, in the courts of the houſe of God," are there called to praiſe the Lord. Yet from any thing contained in theſe verſes, the Pſalmiſt might call on thoſe alone, who ſtood in the temple as ſentinels or prieſts, to praiſe the Lord, as he afterwards calls on the people at large, who did not ſtand in it, for theſe purpoſes. But though he enjoins thoſe who ſtood for theſe purpoſes in the courts of the temple, and whom he afterwards denominates (ver. 19. and 20.) "the houſe of Aaron and "the houſe of Levi," as he alſo enjoins (ver. 1.) the ſervants of the Lord in general to do ſo, whom he afterwards denominates (ver. 19.) "the houſe of Iſrael," what argument can fairly be drawn from this, to ſhew that the Iſraelites at large ſtood when they praiſed the Lord? Nay, even granting that thoſe who (ver. 2.) ſtood in God's houſe were the Iſraelites in general, who ſtood in the outer courts of the houſe of the Lord at the time of the offering up of incenſe, and prayed to God—and alſo when they preſented their ſacrifices, what argument does this afford to prove that they ſtood like-

wife when they fang his praifes? And, in fine, are we reminded that the church in heaven are deſcribed as ſtanding before the throne (Rev. vii. 9.) when they offer up their praiſes? To this it is ſufficient to reply in the words of his friend Mr. Ballentine, which he cites with approbation, p. 227. "The whole book of Revelation, the "epiſtolary as well as the figurative parts, are written in a "figurative manner." Is not this more probable, from the deſcription (chap. viii. ver. 3.) of an angel as coming and ſtanding at an altar in heaven, having a golden cenſer; and to whom was given much incenſe, that he ſhould offer it with the prayers of all ſaints? And yet who would ſuppoſe that there is an altar in heaven, or incenſe, or a cenſer; or that altars ſhould be erected in the church on earth, and that miniſters, when they offer up the prayers of God's people, ſhould have incenſe and cenſers? On the whole, this idea is confirmed by the 11th and 12th verſes of the ſeventh chapter, following thoſe quoted by Mr. Haldane, and informing us, that while part of the celeſtial inhabitants *ſtand* while they offer up their praiſes, part of them alſo *fall upon their faces?* But would any Independent argue from this, that the members of their churches ſhould *ſometimes fall upon their faces* when they preſent their praiſes *, though he is ſurely as much warranted to affirm this, as to affirm that they ſhould *ſtand*, becauſe another part of the heavenly inhabitants are repreſented as ſtanding when engaged in that exerciſe? But if the ſcripture ſeems to point out no particular poſture for the performance of praiſe, nor no particular warrant for ſinging any other ſacred hymns or ſpiritual ſongs than the Pſalms of David, nor no preciſe example nor injunction for a committee, ſimilar to that which is employed by Independents, to inquire into the knowledge and cha-

* Is it ſaid, that what was uttered by thoſe who fell on their faces was a prayer? It is anſwered, that it was no more a prayer than what was ſpoken by thoſe who ſtood before the throne.

racter of thoſe who apply for membership; nay, if for many other things which might eaſily be mentioned, Independents have no expreſs directions in the New Teſtament, though they do not heſitate to adopt them; is it not incontrovertible, that if it be aſſerted that every the minuteſt circumſtance reſpecting the order and diſcipline of the church is explicitly revealed, a poſition is maintained which is not, and cannot be acted upon by any church upon earth? It would appear then, that in many things Independents themſelves, as well as others, are obliged to act on the principle of *expediency*; and yet there are none who are louder than they in reprobating this principle, and, among theſe, there are few who are keener than our author.

It is granted indeed, that like every other principle, that of expediency may be perverted; and that, when ſo perverted, it muſt be very prejudicial. Its abuſe however can never be a valid argument againſt its utility. Though, when employed by wicked and deſigning men to ſet aſide the great and fundamental principles of order and diſcipline which are revealed in ſcripture, it has been attended with evil, yet this will never prove that it may not be followed by good, when uſed to ſupport inferior practices, which do not contradict but promote the former, though at the ſame time they are not explicitly revealed. By many Independent churches, it is practiſed in many inſtances, and muſt therefore, even in *their* opinion, be attended with advantage.

The queſtion, *when* the principle of expediency is to be followed, every Independent is as much bound to anſwer as the Preſbyterian is, unleſs he maintain that there is an explicit warrant in ſcripture for every practice in their churches. An obſervance or practice indeed, though not expreſsly revealed, may be ſafely adopted, whenever it does not contradict any of the eſſential principles of government, or when it is warranted by

other acknowledged general principles. Nor do we hesitate again to assert, that this principle is admitted and acted on by every society *. To follow the author through the whole of his inconsistencies on the different

* We may here notice, that this principle must be applied to regulate the precise degree of frequency with which the Lord's supper is to be celebrated, as we have already attempted to shew that it is not expressly revealed. See Note in p. 264. *et seq.* Mr. Haldane indeed endeavours to prove that it is to be received every Sabbath; and argues that because it is said, 1 Cor. xi. 20. that when the disciples came together, they ate the Lord's supper, and in chap. xvi. 2. that they came together on the first day of the week, they must have observed this ordinance every first day of the week. But this argument proves too much; for if they did eat the supper every time they came together, they must frequently have received it twice or thrice a-week at least, for it is to be presumed that, like Independents, they might meet in a church-capacity on other days than Sabbath. Why then do not Messrs. Haldane, Ewing, and Little, join in commemorating the death of Jesus when they and their *churches* come together into one place, for public instruction or private discipline, on the evenings of Wednesday, or Thursday, or Friday?

It deserves to be remarked also, that as the apostle does not say that the Corinthians *always* ate and drank in the name of the Lord when they were met in a church-capacity, how does Mr. Haldane know how frequently they did so? or how can he affirm that they did so weekly? He tells us however, that it was thus frequently observed by Christians in the first and second century. But we have formerly shown, that the argument is as conclusive in favour of *daily* as of *weekly* communion. Besides, with what consistency can this argument be used by one, who, in the very book which contains it, decidedly protests against its admission in religious disputes. "If any of the religious rites of any "party," says he, p. 51. "be called in question, do they not uni- "formly endeavour to establish these, by appealing to the prac- "tice of the primitive Christians? Indeed so far has this been "carried, that the practice of the three first centuries after Christ "has also been resorted to. This has opened *a wide door for* "*abuses*. It goes upon the supposition, that, during that time, "the churches retained their original purity; but surely we may

ſubjects of which he treats, would neither be practicable within the narrow bounds of the preſent Appendix, nor connected with the principal deſign of the preceding Letters. I ſhall only point out, as ſhortly as poſſible, a few of his inaccuracies on the ſubject of *government*, as this alone is the ground of theſe inquiries.

In reviewing his ſentiments on this topic, it is impoſſible not to notice the very ſtriking contradiction between his views and thoſe of Meſſrs. Ewing and Little. Mr. Ewing, as we have ſhewn, p. 24. 25. 112. 113. moſt pointedly affirms that *every thing* which is to be done, as a part of eccleſiaſtical government and diſcipline, is not to be done in the preſence of the people and only with their conſent. Mr. Haldane, on the contrary, aſſerts, p. 153. and other places, "that the elders are to put "the laws of Chriſt in execution, but only with conſent "and in preſence of the church." And one of the rules followed by Mr. Little in his Tabernacle-church, as quoted in the Narrative referred to, p. 14. is, that *every* thing ſhould be ſubmitted to the vote of the members before it is finally adopted. Mr. Haldane, on the contrary, while he maintains that nothing ſhould be done without their conſent, and while he contends, p. 212. "that every new member ought to be admitted by *the* "*unanimous voice* of the church," objects very ſtrongly to the practice of voting. "We have no inſtance in the "ſcriptures," ſays he, p. 372. "of any thing in the "primitive churches being decided by votes. This

"learn from the corruptions in the churches, even in the days of "the apoſtles, that this was moſt improbable. We are even ex-"preſsly warned upon this ſubject, by being informed that the "myſtery of iniquity was at work in their time." But if it *opens a wide door for abuſe*, as he here aſſerts, to appeal to the practice of the churches, after the apoſtles, upon any queſtion, why does Mr. Haldane, not only on this queſtion, but on that of baptiſm, p. 333. 334. exhibit a very ſtriking inſtance of this impropriety?

" appears at all times unneceſſary, and can be attended " with no good effect." It is manifeſt then, that among three of the moſt zealous of our Tabernacle Independents, there is a decided and important oppoſition of ſentiment, on matters, too, which affect ſome of the firſt principles of Independency. Might not Mr. Haldane then, in his very laudable ſolicitude for the purity of the church, have beſtowed a portion of his ſtrictures and animadverſions on his two erring brethren; and, while he attempts to correct the errors of the members of our Eſtabliſhment, have extended ſome ſalutary caſtigation to Meſſrs. Ewing and Little, of whom the former has advanced an opinion ſubverſive of Independency, and the latter has not ſcrupled to avow a ſentiment which, in Mr. Haldane's apprehenſion, is hoſtile to its intereſts?

To maintain, moreover, as Mr. Haldane here does, that every deciſion in an Independent congregation ought to be perfectly unanimous, and that, when this cannot be the caſe, no determination ſhould be made, ſeems completely ridiculous. Suppoſe, as was remarked, p. 50. a caſe of diſcipline to occur in an Independent church, in which a difference of opinion obtained how far a charge was diſtinctly proved—that the majority are fully ſatisfied that the perſon againſt whom it is brought is guilty, and that the minority profeſs themſelves of an oppoſite mind; nay, ſuppoſe that long and patient inquiry ſhould be made into the matter, and that, as Mr. Haldane adviſes, much fervent prayer ſhould be employed, and that ſtill the members cannot agree—what will be the conſequence? A majority of ninety out of a hundred members, who are convinced that the perſon who is criminated is guilty, are not to inflict on him the merited puniſhment, becauſe they cannot perſuade their brethren to adopt their views. Or if they do inflict it upon him, ſince *unanimity* muſt prevail among all who are aſſociated as an Independent church, the minority

muſt neceſſarily ſeparate from the majority. In *every* inſtance, of courſe, where the minority cannot be perſuaded to think with the majority, and where the laws of Chriſt muſt be put in execution, a ſeparation muſt take place, and new and more numerous Independent churches, from every new minority, muſt continually be forming. And, indeed, combining this favourite principle of Meſſrs. Haldane and Glaſs with the aſſertion of Mr. Ewing (ſee p. 113. and 114. of theſe Letters), that the members of a church may ſeparate from their brethren, and form new ſocieties, for difference of ſentiment on the mereſt trifles, we have another very impreſſive and faithful repreſentation of the *ſchiſmatic* tendency of the Independent ſcheme. *Perfect unanimity*, ſay Meſſrs. Glaſs and Haldane, muſt be obſerved in *all* the deciſions of the church—votes muſt be excluded; and, till the unanimity can be fully attained, forbearance muſt be exerciſed, and the laws of Chriſt muſt not be executed. And when the period of this forbearance comes to an end, though the difference of ſentiment be upon a point which is trifling, the minority, ſays Mr. Ewing, are at perfect liberty, and are in duty bound, ſince unanimity is requiſite in every church, to turn away from the majority, and erect themſelves into a new congregation*!!!

* Since every member of an Independent congregation is admitted by the elder, who preſides at the time, to ſtate his opinion, and as nothing more is expreſſed by a vote, I cannot ſee on what conſiſtent grounds Meſſrs Haldane and Glaſs can object to voting. As the members of the churches, too, mentioned in ſcripture, according to them, voted in the election both of Matthias and the firſt deacons, and as Independents ſtill vote, in many congregations, in the election of their office-bearers, why may they not vote in other deciſions? In a word, ſhould it be ſaid that the reaſoning contained in the preceding Letters cannot be concluſive, becauſe it proceeds upon the falſe ſuppoſition that all the members of an Independent congregation are allowed to vote in every buſineſs;

The views which Mr. Haldane gives of *the nature* of the power which is claimed by Preſbyterians are, like the ſtatements of many other Independents, unfair and exaggerated. He calls it, for inſtance, like his predeceſſor Mr. Lockier, p. 158. "human authority or coercion," and in p. 159. "compulſory power." It has already however been attempted to be proved (Letter II.), that no more authority, nor coercion, nor compulſion, is aſſumed by Preſbyterians than by Independents*; and that the only difference between the two is this, that, among the former, the elders alone are intruſted with the

it is replied, that it can never be overthrown by this, for if they are not allowed to vote, they are undoubtedly permitted to expreſs their judgment, and only in as far as it accords with it can any propoſal be carried. But in what reſpects this privilege *virtually* differs from that of voting, or how the latter can be attended with worſe effects, I acknowledge that I am utterly unable to perceive. As Independents, though they allow the members to ſpeak, do not finally determine till they are completely unanimous, might not the ſame thing be done, even though a vote was taken?

* The ſame power which Mr. Haldane ſays, p. 372. line 21. "is in the church itſelf," and to which every member is ſubject; a power which authorizes them, as he tells us, p. 350. "if they "look to Chriſt for direction, and form a deliberate judgment, to "act according to it againſt an offending member, *whether he be* "*convinced or not*:" the ſame power, we ſay, is all for which Preſbyterians contend for their office-bearers. They admit too with him, p. 258. that theſe office-bearers, who are rulers only under Jeſus, have no more power *to make laws* than Independents themſelves aſcribe to their churches. They allow alſo, as much as Independents themſelves, that "rulers cannot require the "church, or any individual member, to ſubmit to their deciſions, "unleſs they can ſhew that the authority of Chriſt enjoins ſub-"miſſion in that particular act." And at the ſame time they maintain, that "if they look to Chriſt for direction, and form a "deliberate judgment, they muſt act according to it, whether "thoſe who are under them *are convinced or not*," as Mr. Haldane declares, in the paſſage now quoted, muſt be done by the members of an Independent congregation to an offending brother.

government, while, among the latter, though the elders are the nominal rulers, the people alſo muſt be conſulted on every occaſion. But this, as has at leaſt been endeavoured to be eſtabliſhed in the Third Letter, is to conſtitute the perſons who are appointed to be ruled, and who are far more numerous than the titular governors, in reality the rulers. And to talk of *governors*, as is done by this author, p. 262. and 263. *ruling* their congregations merely by preſiding in their aſſemblies, and by perſuading them to their duty, while they are totally unable to *inflict upon them any puniſhment* if they refuſe to comply with their requiſitions, ſeems to be very abſurd *.

* High indeed was the eſteem which was formerly profeſſed by our author, and many of his friends, for the Rev. Rowland Hill, a man who once warmly patroniſed them. No man however can ſpeak more ſtrongly in condemnation of the ſyſtem which they *now* profeſs than this very writer, whom they certainly once accounted a man peculiarly diſtinguiſhed for candour and charity. " One extreme," ſays he, p. 108. of his Remarks attached to his Journal, and *addreſſed to our author*, " generally produces another. " However I might be diſpoſed to vote for the reduction of the " Epiſcopacy of the Engliſh Church, yet I had much rather be " under the Right Reverend Fathers in God with us, than under " the juriſdiction of *the Moſt Reverend Mothers* in God among the " ſtricter Independents.—*Medio tutiſſimus ibis.*" Again, ſays he, p. 80. " To take a candid and general view of this mode of " church-diſcipline (that of the Church of Scotland), I am not " ſurpriſed, allowing ſomething for education, that every claſs of " Seceders ſhould have ſtill adhered to her *general* rules. For, " admitting in the firſt place, the juſt requiſition of the choice of " miniſters to reſt with the people, it is but conſiſtent that the " further management ſhould in a meaſure reſt with others. If " it be with the people to appoint, and to accuſe in caſe of miſ- " conduct; it is but reaſonable that others ſhould determine the " juſtice of that accuſation. If the total controul reſts with thoſe " that appointed him to the office, the rule is perfectly reverſed: " Obey them that have the *rule* over you, and ſubmit yourſelves; " for they watch for your ſouls, as they that muſt give account: " that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for that is

It is obſerved likewiſe by Mr. Haldane, p. 366. that "the idea of a church of Chriſt ſitting by its repre- "ſentatives" (as the paſtors or elders have improperly been called) "has no foundation in ſcripture—and that "all the directions given by the apoſtles to the churches "reſpecting diſcipline were evidently addreſſed to the "whole church." In proof of this, he adduces what is ſaid by Paul to the church of Corinth reſpecting the inceſtuous perſon. But for an attempt at leaſt to refute

"unprofitable unto you: Heb. xiii. 17. For, ſuppoſing the con- "troul to be with the people, it is *they* that are to have *the rule* "*over him*, and he muſt *be admoniſhed by them*. He is neither "ſhepherd, nor paſtor, to watch over; nor elder, to rule over "them; nor biſhop, to overſee them: he knows nothing of "*authority* but by their *permiſſion*, and is perfectly *the creature of* "*their caprice and controul*. All diſputes, therefore, under ſuch a "frame of government, muſt terminate in diviſions. Now, in a "*ſtrict* Independent government," (and ſuch a government it appears exiſts in all our Scotch Tabernacle-congregations, that of Mr. Ewing excepted) "in a variety of inſtances, this fact is "principally proved, becauſe arbritration is wanting, and the "Preſbyterian government wiſely provides for this arbitration."

And, in ſhort, he remarks upon Heb. xiii. 17. that "ſome "have ſuppoſed the word ἡγέομαι would have been better tranſ- "lated by the ſofter term, to lead or guide, than to rule. The "ſofter," adds he, "the better, as tyranny is no more proper in "the miniſter over the people, than it is in the people over the "miniſter. But I judge we have here a diſtinction without a "difference. When a man leads and guides, I think he may be "ſaid to rule; though I confeſs the word *rule*, and eſpecially "when attended with that of *ſubmit*, is as *griping* to the conſe- "quential old ladies in a ſtrictly Independent church, as is the "word *obey*, in the marriage-ſervice of our Engliſh Liturgy, to "many a female, when under the neceſſity of promiſing, for once, "what ſhe never means afterwards to perform!!"

If the word ἡγέομαι here ſignifies to lead, it means, as was proved, Letter II. to lead or guide in a way which implies the exerciſe of authority, though at the ſame time not inconſiſtent with the uſe of perſuaſion.

his very superficial statement of this argument, as well as the more able objections of Mr. Cotton, the reader is referred to Letter VII. And as to his remark in that page, "that when the whole church joins in an act of "discipline, it is calculated more to impress the mind of "the offender, to manifest the obedience of the whole "to the laws of Christ, and to create a greater abhorrence "of sin in the church, for thus passing sentence on one "another, they condemn themselves if they should ever "act in a similar manner," it proves a great deal too much. On the same principle, it would be better to admit all the lieges in a city to join in performing an act of civil juridical authority, than to commit that power to the magistrates alone: for it might be urged, with equal plausibility, that it is calculated more to impress "the mind of an offender, to manifest the obedience of "the community to the laws of the kingdom, and to "create a greater abhorrence of the crime in them, for "thus passing sentence on another, they would condemn "themselves if they should ever act in a similar manner." The sophistry of this reasoning is obvious, whether applied to church or politics. And if the lieges of a city, by submitting to the authority exercised by their magistrates when they inflict punishment upon any offender, as really express their obedience to the law, and their abhorrence of the crime, as if they themselves, in *any sense*, had been judges—nay, if, by submitting to that power which publicly pronounces sentence upon another, they as incontestably condemn themselves, if they should ever act in a similar manner, as if they had been magistrates, is not the same thing manifest as to the members of the church?

Another passage brought forward by Mr. Haldane, to shew that the people are to be admitted in every matter of government to an equality of power, with respect to judging, with the nominal rulers, is Matth. xviii. 17. And in confirmation of the arguments of Independents

from this place, he fills up almoſt ten pages of his book with a quotation from Dr. Campbell, an author to whom he is not a little indebted; and with very copious citations from whoſe Lectures on Church-hiſtory, his friend Mr. Ewing, with the editors of the late Edinburgh Quarterly Magazine and Liverpool Repoſitory, have frequently enriched their writings. For an examination however of the remarks of the Doctor, and of Independents in general, upon that celebrated paſſage, ſee Letter VI. There it is obſerved, that by *the church* mentioned in Matth. xviii. to which offences are to be told, Mr. Parker of New England, a very eminent Independent, honeſtly allows that the firſt time it occurs, it means expreſsly *the ariſtocratic part*, or the elders: "Præciſe partem ariſtocraticam, id eſt preſbyterium." There, too, it is at leaſt endeavoured to be proved, that, in Acts viii. the term *church* denotes the office-bearers, and they alone; and that, even upon the interpretations of this place which have been given by the moſt famous Independent writers, it is an argument for Preſbytery, and not for Independency, though it is urged by Mr. Haldane, with the reſt of his brethren, as ſupporting the latter only. Let us hear however what is ſaid by this diſtinguiſhed writer, whoſe authority is quoted by Mr. Haldane, and under whoſe reaſoning he ſeems more willing to ſhelter himſelf than under his own. "Let it "be obſerved," ſays he, as cited by our author, p. 148. "that our Lord gave theſe directions during the ſub- "ſiſtence of the Moſaic eſtabliſhment; and if we believe "that he ſpoke intelligibly, or with a view to be under- "ſtood, we muſt believe alſo, that he uſed the word in "an acceptation with which the hearers were acquainted. "Dodwell himſelf ſaw the propriety of this rule of in- "terpreting (Diſtinction between Soul and Spirit, &c. "ſect. vii.) when he ſaid, 'It very much confirms me "in my reaſonings, when I find an interpretation of the

" ſcriptures not only agreeable to the words of the ſcrip-
" tures, but agreeable alſo to the notions and ſignifica-
" tions of words then received. For that ſenſe which
" was moſt likely to be then underſtood was, in all like-
" lihood, the true ſenſe intended by the Holy Ghoſt
" himſelf. Otherwiſe there could be no ſecurity that his
" true ſenſe could be conveyed to future ages, if they had
" been themſelves miſtaken in it, to whoſe underſtanding
" the Holy Ghoſt was then particularly concerned to
" accommodate himſelf.' Now all the then known ac-
" ceptations," ſays the Doctor, " as I ſhewed before,
" of the name εκκλησια, were theſe two, the whole
" Jewiſh people, and a particular congregation. The
" ſcope of the place ſufficiently ſhews it could not be the
" former of theſe ſenſes; it muſt therefore be the latter.
" What further confirms this interpretation is, that the
" Jews were accuſtomed to call thoſe aſſemblies which
" met together for worſhip in the ſame ſynagogue by this
" appellation, and had, if we may believe ſome learned
" men converſant in Jewiſh antiquities, a rule of pro-
" cedure ſimilar to that here recommended, which our
" Lord adopted from the ſynagogue, and tranſplanted
" into his church." Now admitting, as is obſerved in Letter VI. the Doctor's remark, which Mr. Haldane quotes as one of the bulwarks of his ſyſtem, that the Jews were accuſtomed to call thoſe aſſemblies which met together for worſhip in the ſame ſynagogue by this appellation, and allowing that they had a rule ſimilar to that which is here recommended, a conſequence very different from what is apprehended either by the Doctor, or the writer before us, appears neceſſarily to follow. It ſeems unavoidably to reſult from it, as was before proved, that, as in a Jewiſh ſynagogue, though the offence is told in the *hearing* of the members, it is thoſe who are diſtinguiſhed by the name of rulers, and they alone, even without aſking the opinion or conſent of the mem-

bers, that are to judge and determine. Such it was before evinced from the conceſſions of Goodwin, who ſays, that "there never could be leſs than *three* rulers in "any ſynagogue, that a major vote *might caſt it among* "*them;*" and ſuch alſo, as was eſtabliſhed from the authority both of Joſephus and Maimonides, were the perſons who adminiſtered theſe Jewiſh aſſemblies, and without ſoliciting the conſent of the people. This quotation from Dr. Campbell therefore, inſtead of ſupporting this argument for Independency, appears completely to overthrow it; and proves, that though the members of a Chriſtian church, like thoſe of a Jewiſh ſynagogue, may be allowed *to hear* the complaint which is preſented by a brother to thoſe who are rulers againſt one who offends him, it is the office-bearers alone, without the conſent or concurrence of the members, that are *to judge* of the complaint, as it was they alone who judged of ſimilar matters in a Jewiſh ſynagogue.

It is affirmed by Mr. Haldane, p. 164. that by "the "whole church," as it is tranſlated in our Bibles, who are repreſented as joining in the decree of the apoſtles and elders at Jeruſalem (Acts xv. 22.), members who had no official character are intended. But before this is admitted, it is requeſted that what is mentioned, Letter XVI. p. 276. 277. may be anſwered. And if this ſhould be anſwered, it is begged that what is ſtated, Letter VIII. may be fairly refuted, before any argument can be deduced from that paſſage, for the right of members in the preſent day to judge in every matter of eccleſiaſtical government. And, indeed, as Mr. Haldane expreſsly maintains that the deciſion which was pronounced by the apoſtles and elders at Jeruſalem was an inſpired deciſion, the reaſon which he aſſigns for allowing uninſpired members to aſſiſt at this conſultation is very extraordinary. "It may appear ſtrange," ſays he, "that if a revelation was to be given reſpecting this

" matter, the whole church ſhould be joined in the " decree of the apoſtles, or that they and their elders, " as well as the apoſtles, *ſhould be called together to conſult.* " But by this means a great end was gained. The " church heard all that could be ſaid upon the ſubject, " together with the deciſion of the choſen witneſſes and " ambaſſadors of Chriſt, and thus, no doubt, would be " diſpoſed the more readily to embrace uncircumciſed " Gentiles as brethren in Chriſt." Though this however might be a very good reaſon for allowing the members of the church at Jeruſalem *to hear* the deliberations and determination of this aſſembly, which Mr. Haldane deſcribes as an inſpired aſſembly, it appears, in every view, difficult to conceive how it could render it proper to admit men who were not inſpired to conſult with the former upon the preſent queſtion. Could thoſe who were in this ſituation add any thing to the information of thoſe who were guided by an immediate miraculous influence? or for what purpoſe could thoſe who were aided ſimply by their own ſagacity be called together *to conſult*, as Mr. Haldane affirms, with thoſe who were directed by this extraordinary energy?

The third ſubject of inquiry contained in theſe Letters, namely, Whether there ſhould be a claſs of elders who are only to rule, while there are others who preach as well as rule, is very curſorily examined by Mr. Haldane. He denies that there ſhould be ſuch an order, p. 230. and boldly aſſerts that the inſtitution of it " was one of " the ſteps of the myſtery of iniquity by which the man " of ſin acquired ſuch power." But, in oppoſition to this, the reader is requeſted to peruſe with impartiality Letters IX. X. and XI. where it is endeavoured to be proved, that this is an office founded on reaſon, preſcribed by ſcripture, and diſtinguiſhed by the approbation of the moſt zealous and orthodox primitive fathers in the ages immediately poſterior to the apoſtles. Let

him consult especially the testimony produced from the writings which have frequently been ascribed to Ambrose, p. 157. to the existence of this particular order of elders in the earliest periods of the Christian church; and to his declaration that it was on account of the discontinuance of this order, at the time at which he lived, that the power of the clergy had become so enormous:—the words of Bucer, which are there quoted, respecting the Bohemian churches, "who alone almost," as he remarks, "*preserved in the world* the purity of the doctrine, and "the vigour of the discipline of Christ," amidst the universal corruption of the Romish church, and who had this order among them. Let him recollect, as is there stated, that it was to check these excesses which were practised at that period by the Romish clergy, that Calvin, at the Reformation, revived these elders. Let him attend to the fact, that *Roman Catholics* and Episcopalians are not less zealous than Independents against this class of rulers; that, as is remarked by the learned Dr. Owen (himself an Independent), p. 177. there is not one new argument advanced against the passage in 1 Tim. v. 17. which has frequently been urged for ruling elders—not one exception given in to the affixing such a sense to it, but what has long since been coined by *Papists* and Prelatists, and managed with better colours than the Independents of his day were able to lay on them. Let him reflect, we say, upon these things, and then consider what he must think of the swaggering assertion of this author, that the institution of this order was one of the steps of the mystery of iniquity by which the man of sin acquired such power!!!

Rash, indeed, and unfounded as is this assertion, respecting the tendency of this order, it must be acknowledged to be less wonderful than some of the arguments by which he endeavours to shew that this order is not appointed in scripture. The ministers, he says, are called by Presbyterians

the Clergy, or, as the Greek word from which it comes literally signifies, the men who are the peculiar inheritance of God, and the elders who rule but do not preach, Lay-elders, or the Laity. He next attempts to shew that the first of these names ought not to be appropriated to ministers, and that the people are as really a part of the clergy, or of the inheritance of the Lord, as the pastors; and having produced, in support of this, six very humorous pages from Dr. Campbell's Lectures, imagines that he has proved to the satisfaction of all, that there ought to be no such thing as the office of lay-elders, who rule and do not preach. But what connection this conclusion has with these premises, I profess myself completely unable to discover. Because some have applied to the elders who both teach and rule, and those who only rule, the names Clergy and Lay-elders, therefore there can be no such office as that of elders who rule but do not preach!! How astonishing! The man who can discern how the one of these sentiments follows from the other, possesses indeed no common portion of ingenuity and sagacity. Might it not as well be concluded, from the application of improper names to these elders, that there should not be an order of elders in the church who are to preach and rule, as to infer, merely from the misapplication of these names to them (even granting it to be a misapplication), that there should not be a class of elders who are only to rule? Does Mr. Haldane, moreover, need to be informed, that even Calvin himself, the great reviver and champion for Presbytery, at the era of the Reformation, denies the distinction which he here reprobates, and yet strongly and expressly contends for these elders? Is he not sensible also, if he is willing to acknowledge it, that such Presbyterians as retain the terms Clergy and Lay-elders do not use them in the sense in which he represents them as employed by the Romish church? Will he venture to come forward, and, as an honest man, declare, whether

it is an eſſential principle of Preſbytery to require all who are connected with it to believe, as he would inſinuate, p. 231. by his quotation from Dr. Campbell, that the miniſters, who preach as well as rule, are called Clergy, "as being in this preſent world God's *peculium*, or ſpe-"cial inheritance?"—or that the members of its congregations at large, and elders who only rule in particular, are denominated Laymen, in common writings and converſation, from a Greek word which ſignifies a ſtone, becauſe they reſemble a ſtone (ſee p. 234.) in ignorance and inſenſibility? Do they adopt the opinion of Altensfaig in his Lexicon, which he cites with very great approbation from Dr. Campbell, when reaſoning againſt them? "A clergyman ſignifies a "learned man, ſcientific, ſkilful, full of knowledge, "accompliſhed, and intelligent. A layman, on the con-"trary, ſignifies an unlearned man, unſkilful, ſilly, and "*ſtony?*" And is every clergyman in their opinion, as we are told that he was in his, as quoted by Mr. Haldane, "in ſo far as he is a clergyman, reſpectable; and every "layman, ſo far as he is ſuch, deſpicable?" Or do they adopt the ſentiments of Cardinal Bona, as copied from Dr. Campbell, p. 235. in relation to the care that ſhould be taken by the clergy, that laymen may not be allowed *to do themſelves harm by ſtudying the profounder parts of ſcripture*, which their ſtupidity, as he expreſſes it, is utterly incapable of comprehending? "Concerning laymen," ſays he, "in whom pride the mother of blindneſs reigns, "ſo far as reſpects thoſe things which regard faith and "morals. For when like idiots, they preſume to explain "the ſacred writings, which are the moſt profound of "all writings; and again, when they happen to poſſeſs "any external accompliſhments, they deſpiſe all others, "and being thus doubly blinded by pride, they deſervedly "fall into that worſt error through which they are in-"fatuated by God, ſo that they know not how to diſ-

" cern what is good and what is evil. Wherefore, let " not laymen read all the books of the facred fcripture." Will Mr. Haldane maintain that fuch is the acceptation in which the terms under review are underftood by Presbyterians; or that fuch are the views entertained by the Church of Scotland of the Clergy and Lay-elders, as they are called by fome, or of the Laity in general? Is not all that is meant when her miniflers or members fpeak of her clergy, perfons who are ordained to teach and rule; and when they talk of lay-elders, thofe of the people who are elders in the church, and yet are only to rule and not to preach? And upon what principle of common fenfe can it be made to appear, that becaufe *neither the terms* Clergy nor Elders are to be found in fcripture, there cannot be two feparate claffes of office-bearers, one who preach as well as rule, and another who rule but do not preach?

It is granted by Mr. Haldane, p. 237. that there may be a diverfity of gifts among elders, and that it is not improper for each of them peculiarly to apply his mind to, and to be chiefly engaged in that particular part of duty for which he is beft qualified. " One man " may be beft qualified for labouring in public; another " may be his fuperior in converfation, and may more " eminently promote the edification of the church by " more private admonition and inftruction." The truth of this remark he illuftrates by two inftances, taken from characters in political life. " Dr. Franklin, " fays he, " fo juftly celebrated for his wifdom and genius, feldom " or never made a fpeech in Congrefs; yet fuch was " the eftimation of his judgment and penetration, that his " opinion, delivered in a fhort fentence or two, had gene- " rally the greateft weight. Mr. Addifon had no talents " for public fpeaking, and yet he was fecretary of ftate. " Had thefe men been members of a church, and ex- " celled as much in the knowledge of divine things as

" they did in other things, would they not have been " eminently qualified for overſeeing or feeding the flock " of God?" Now, if, as was before proved, there is to be a diverſity of offices in the church of Chriſt correſponding to the diverſified gifts of the members, and if there be ſome members, though admirably fitted for ruling, as little qualified for being preachers as Dr. Franklin or Mr. Addiſon were for being public ſpeakers, is it not evident, even upon his own principles, that there ſhould be ſome elders who are only to rule and not to preach in the church of God?

In confirmation of his remarks upon the neceſſity of a diverſity of eccleſiaſtical offices correſponding to the diverſified gifts of the members, he refers us to 1 Tim. v. 17. " Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy " of double honour, eſpecially they who labour in the " word and doctrine. That by double honour," ſays he, " here is meant larger temporal ſupport, is evident not " only from the frequent uſe of the word τιμη in this " ſenſe, but from the reaſon of the precept; for, adds " the apoſtle, Thou ſhalt not muzzle the ox that tread- " eth out the corn; and the labourer is worthy of his " reward; ver. 18. This ſupport is to be beſtowed both " on thoſe who rule, and on thoſe who preach, although " more abundantly on the former.

" Some," ſays he, " in order to avoid a diſtinction " between *preaching* and *ruling* elders, conſider the pre- " cept to reſpect thoſe elders who are laborious in the " diſcharge of their duty; but this implies the abſurdity " of the church being called to ſupport in a liberal man- " ner elders who were not laborious. The meaning of " the precept ſeems obvious, that the elders who faith- " fully diſcharge their duty ſhould be liberally provided " for, but that this was eſpecially their duty towards " thoſe who labour in the word and doctrine. Their " gifts were ſuperior, they were calculated for more ex-

" tenſive uſefulneſs, they would require to devote more " of their time to ſtudy and reading and preaching the " goſpel, not merely in the church, but to unbelievers " around them, they ſtood in need of more ſupport from " their brethren."

After conceding however ſo much in favour of that very office which he had before aſſerted to be one of the ſteps of the myſtery of iniquity by which the man of ſin acquired ſuch power, he advances an obſervation not leſs contradictory to the preceding ſentiments than totally inconſiſtent with the text upon which it is made. " If " any," ſays he, " from this text (1. Tim. v. 17.), infer " that the elders who rule well are not *entitled* to preach, " they muſt alſo maintain that the elders who preach are " not entitled to rule; a reſtriction which has never been, " and is not likely to be advanced." But are we not inſtructed in this very paſſage, that the elders who labour in word and doctrine muſt alſo *rule well*, before they can be entitled, *in preference* to others, to the double honour here mentioned? And is it not as expreſsly affirmed (as obſerved, Letter XI.) that other elders, when they merely rule well, and do not *labour in the word and doctrine*, are alſo entitled to double honour? Does it not follow of courſe, ſince none can receive this liberal ſupport who do not perform *the whole of their duty*, that there muſt be a claſs of elders who fulfil all the duties which they are called to perform when they merely *rule well*, and at the ſame time a diſtinct claſs who are *not only to rule*, but to be employed in preaching the word and doctrine, and who muſt faithfully diſcharge *both* parts of their function before they can more eſpecially be entitled from it to liberal maintenance? If, as the moſt learned of Independents however admits (Letter XI. p. 177.), " a rational man, who is unpre- " judiced, and *never heard of the controverſy about ruling* " *elders*, upon reading this text, can hardly avoid an " apprehenſion that there are two ſorts of elders, ſome

" who labour in the word and doctrine and rule well, and " ſome who rule well, but do not ſo labour;" and if, as even a great Epiſcopalian maintains, p. 178. any man who would draw an oppoſite concluſion from theſe words *would ſpeak nonſenſe;* how can Mr. Haldane with any juſtice aſſert, " that if any, from this text, infer that the " elders who rule well are not *entitled* to preach, they " muſt alſo maintain, that the elders who preach are not " entitled to rule * ?"

With regard to the *fourth* of the principles diſcuſſed in theſe Letters, or the ſubjection of the rulers of a particular congregation to the authoritative review of the rulers and office-bearers of a number of congregations met as a Preſbytery, or Synod, or Aſſembly, Mr. Haldane is guilty of no leſs miſrepreſentation than on ſome of the preceding articles. " From the view we have taken," ſays he, p. 157. " of the conſtitution of the apoſtolic churches, " it appears, that although embarked in the ſame cauſe, " they muſt have been completely independent of each " other. Jeſus has not even permitted an individual to " transfer to a church the ſubjection which is only due " to himſelf. Far leſs can we ſuppoſe, that he has given " one church, or churches, dominion over others." And again, " Can any thing be found in ſcripture to " countenance the idea of the dependence of congrega- " tions of ſaints upon one another? In vain do we look " for it." It is a well known fact however, as was before noticed, that Preſbyterians claim for a Preſbytery or Synod no more dominion over a particular congrega-

* " Some good people who met in the North," ſays Mr. Rowland Hill, p. 152. " rigid for Independency, thought they had proved " that all elders were preachers, by aſking if all preachers were " not elders; the firſt propoſition being granted, it was ſuppoſed " the other would follow in courſe. It is juſt as readily granted, " that all kings are men, but it is not as readily proved therefrom, " that *all men are kings.*"

tion than an Independent church uniformly claims over each of its members, and that the former require none of their congregations to be more dependent upon them than an Independent church requires each of its members to be dependent upon it.

To prove that every particular congregation ought not to be independent of the review and controul of the miniſters and elders of a number of congregations, we before referred (Letters XV. and XVI.) to what is ſaid in ſcripture of the church at Jeruſalem. This church we then endeavoured to ſhew, from the number of thoſe who are repreſented as having been added to it at different times, and who ſtatedly reſided there—from the number alſo of the miniſters who laboured in it for many years, and from the variety of languages which were requiſite for its edification, muſt have conſiſted of ſeveral congregations, which, though adminiſtered by their ſeparate and particular rulers, were ſubject alſo to one common government. In oppoſition to this, Mr. Haldane remarks, p. 153. "We are but imperfectly acquainted with the "ſtate of things at Jeruſalem. The temple-worſhip was "completely different from any thing among us. Vaſt "crowds of Jews came up to the great feaſt from every "part of Judea and the adjacent countries. We have "no reaſon to ſuppoſe that the thouſands who believed "were all fixed inhabitants at Jeruſalem." And again, p. 154. "We learn from Joſephus, that the multitude "who aſſembled in the temple was immenſe." He ſays (Jewiſh War, book vi. chap. ix.), that "Ceſtius, under "Nero, directed the high-prieſts to take the number of "the inhabitants of Jeruſalem at the time of the paſſover. "They found the ſacrifices to be 256,500, which, allow-"ing ten perſons to each victim (the ordinary number), "amounts to 2,565,000 perſons, pure according to the "rites of the law, deducting thoſe who by uncleanneſſes

" could not partake at this feaſt *. He elſewhere eſti-
" mates the number of thoſe who aſſembled at the feaſt
" of the paſſover (book ii. chap. xiv.) at 3,000,000, a
" number to which the uſual reſident inhabitants bore
" no proportion." But allowing that ſome of theſe converts were not ſtated inhabitants of Jeruſalem, it has already been ſhewn that the number of thoſe who are repreſented as having their uſual reſidence there, was far too great for a ſingle congregation. And, indeed, if Jeruſalem, as he allows, was ſo large as to accommodate three millions at the time of the paſſover, the number of its fixed inhabitants muſt have been very great. When therefore we conſider the ſucceſs of the goſpel, in that favoured period, in *other* places—the number of the miniſters conſtantly engaged in this important work in the city of Jeruſalem, and yet that they could not find time to ſerve the poor—and that they were thus employed in this city for almoſt thirty years, is it poſſible to believe that no more were converted by all of them in that ſpace, than could conveniently meet for receiving the ſacrament, and for other religious purpoſes, in one congregation? Was this the time when, agreeably to the intimations of ancient prophecy (Pſal. cx.), the ſpiritual offſpring of Chriſt were to ſurpaſs in number the drops of dew from the womb of the morning? and was the proportion of theſe, as Independents affirm, that were to be found among the fixed inhabitants of Jeruſalem, no more, in a ſpace of almoſt thirty years, than one congregation? If ſo, indeed, the ſucceſs of probably a hundred miniſters in Jeruſalem muſt have been extremely ſmall; and it ſeems difficult to account for this very extraordinary fact, that

* Baſnage ſays, in his Hiſtory of the Jews, book i. chap. ix. that ſometimes two millions and ſeven hundred thouſand perſons convened.

while the reſt of the world needed ſo much the means of ſalvation, ſo many miniſters ſhould have remained in that city for ſo long a period though their labours were ſo ineffectual, while other preachers, in many other places, were made in a much more diſtinguiſhed degree to triumph in Chriſt. On the whole, as was before hinted, p. 258. does not this aſſertion of Independents ſtrengthen the hands of infidels, and weaken, if not annihilate, one of the grandeſt and moſt powerful arguments for Chriſtianity—that which is drawn from its aſtoniſhing ſucceſs in the early ages? If the number of followers which, during thirty years, it gained even in Jeruſalem, where our Saviour lived, and died, and roſe again—where ſo many apoſtles, and prophets, and evangeliſts, and paſtors miniſtered—where ſo many miracles were performed, and ſo many Jews reſided—was ſo ſmall, how much ſmaller muſt have been their number in other places which were leſs highly diſtinguiſhed? In every point of view then, we ſeem bound to acknowledge that the number of converts, among the ſtated inhabitants of Jeruſalem, muſt have been much greater than could meet merely in a ſingle congregation. And ſince the whole of theſe different congregations in Jeruſalem, as was before ſpecified, are repreſented as conſtituting one church, ſubject to the ſame common and general government, it certainly preſents a very powerful argument for ſubjecting a number of ſeparate congregations, in the preſent day, to a ſimilar government, while they are ſubordinate alſo to their own particular rulers *.

* It was before remarked, that even allowing that the temple could have contained the whole of the Chriſtians at Jeruſalem, it does not appear that the apoſtles were permitted to preach in it at pleaſure, after they are ſaid to have been beaten for this: Acts v. But even admitting, as is ſtated, Acts v. 42. that they were permitted frequently after this, like any other Jews who

As to the paſſages which he produces, p. 156. 157. to ſhew that the whole of the believers in Jeruſalem were accuſtomed to meet for religious purpoſes in one aſſembly, they have been conſidered in the preceding Letters.

As has already been remarked, the fifteenth chapter of the book of Acts has often been urged as an argument for Preſbyterian courts of review. But without endeavouring to overthrow the reaſoning on which this inference is founded, Mr. Haldane does not heſitate very roundly to aſſert, p. 159. that "the paſſage is wholly inapplicable "to the purpoſe." And having proved by *this aſſertion* that it is thus inapplicable, he details at length the theory of Independents, which has before been examined in our review of this chapter.

In the account, too, which Mr. Haldane gives of this reference, there are many affirmations inconſiſtent with the ſimple narrative contained in this paſſage. He maintains, for inſtance, that the deciſion delivered was an inſpired deciſion; and one reaſon, he tells us, p. 160. why the church at Antioch ſubmitted the controverſy to the deciſion of the aſſembly which met at Jeruſalem was, that "the "apoſtles were ſtill there, who were the choſen witneſſes of "the death and reſurrection of Chriſt, Acts x. 41. to "whom in a particular manner, the promiſe of the Spirit "was given, to guide them into all truth, John xvi. 13." But was not the reference made, not only to the apoſtles, but to the elders at Jeruſalem? Acts xv. 2. Were not

were men of learning, to addreſs the people from any paſſage of the Old Teſtament that was read in their hearing, and even granting that in theſe addreſſes, as is ſaid in the text here cited, they took an opportunity to teach and preach to them Jeſus, it is not credible that they would be allowed to meet there with the perſons who compoſed their church alone, and deliberate in ſecret, like our preſent Independents, upon matters of government.

the latter admitted to join in the conſultation? Are they not, as well as the apoſtles, repreſented in the decree, as laying neceſſary burdens upon the Chriſtians at Antioch? ver. 28. Yet unqueſtionably they were not inſpired; and if ſo, muſt not the apoſtles alſo, in the preſent matter, have acted as uninſpired? for, as has already been proved, the elders could neither have been admitted to conſult nor determine, had the apoſtles been guided by a miraculous influence: all they could have done, would have been ſimply to ſubmit to the explicit ſupernatural deciſion of the Spirit ſpeaking by the apoſtles.

He ſays, that the apoſtles, and elders, and *the church*, p. 161. "came together to conſider the queſtion of the "neceſſity of circumciſion to ſalvation." But, in oppoſition to this, we are informed, Acts xv. 6. that it was only "the apoſtles and elders who came together to "conſider of the matter," as it is to them alone, ver. 2. that it is repreſented as having been ſubmitted. Beſides, if an inſpired deciſion was to be pronounced by the apoſtles alone, why was it requiſite that the elders and church ſhould come together to conſider this point? He aſſerts, that the diſputing mentioned, ver. 7. did not take place among the apoſtles. But would not any one who looks at the 6th verſe, and reflects upon the perſons who are there deſcribed as coming together, imagine that it was among the ſame perſons that the diſputing ſpoken of, ver. 7. enſued? And to affirm that it could not be among the apoſtles, "becauſe, in ordering the "affairs of the church, they were under the infallible "direction of the Spirit, and never differed in their "doctrine," is to take for granted the very thing to be proved. Might they not differ for a time in their diſcuſſions, to aſcertain His mind upon this ſubject, as Paul and Peter, though apoſtles, differed at another time, upon another point? Gal. ii. As Mr. Haldane

moreover admits, p. 162. that the expreſſion, *it ſeemed good to the Holy Ghoſt*, "does not appear to refer," as Mr. Innes contends, "to the Spirit, as guiding the "apoſtles, but to the teſtimony quoted by James from "the word of God, concerning the Gentiles being "received into the church," it is difficult to conceive on what ground he can believe that the deciſion delivered by this aſſembly was inſpired. To maintain that it was ſo, becauſe "it *is inſerted* as a part of that ſcripture "which cannot be broken," is to advance an opinion which, unleſs it can be proved that the apoſtles and elders acted in this inſtance under a miraculous influence, is certainly untenable. Upon the ſame principle might it not be proved, that as the letter of Claudius Lyſias, the Roman captain (Acts xxiii. 26.—30.), is inſerted in ſcripture, he, too, muſt have been inſpired? Though "cir-"cumciſion, in ſhort, was a ſolemn ordinance of God, "and though it was therefore proper that it, as well as "the law of Moſes, ſhould thus publicly be declared to "be no longer neceſſary for the acceptable worſhippers of "Jehovah," yet it appears to be more than we can venture with ſafety to affirm, that this aſſembly, while they quoted ſcripture, and adduced miracles, in confirmation of their opinion, needed to be guided by a ſupernatural influence in making this declaration. This point can be determined only by ſcripture, and ſcripture ſays nothing to lead us to adopt the views of Mr. Haldane. Farther, when it is recorded that the apoſtles and elders, when conſulted upon this matter, decided that circumciſion was no longer neceſſary, and adduced ſcripture, and appealed to miracles, in ſupport of their determination, and when we ſee ſimilar ſentiments advanced reſpecting the law of Moſes in general, in other paſſages, no room is left for difference of opinion upon the preſent ſubject in future ages.

Is it said with Mr. Haldane, p. 164. that it cannot be demonstrated that the apostles acted in their uninspired capacity because elders were joined with them; for Timothy and Sosthenes are joined with Paul in the salutations of his Epistles, and yet, in writing them, he acted as inspired? This objection, as stated by Mr. Glass, had been considered before; and the reader is referred to the Letters which relate to this very interesting chapter for a reply to this quibble.

Again, we are told by Mr. Haldane, p. 163. that "this council, as some call it, would rather authorize "appeals to a particular church, an argument which has "not escaped the Church of Rome." It is answered, that we have repeatedly declared that the apostles and elders at Jerusalem were referred to by the church at Antioch, not as ministers of the church of Jerusalem, for neither the church of Jerusalem, nor any other individual church, was entitled to such power over the church at Antioch. They were viewed simply as ministers of Christ in general, and constituted a court of ecclesiastical office-bearers different from that which met at Antioch, and to whose authoritative review the latter was subordinate. But if they were not referred to as the ministers of Jerusalem, but simply as ministers of the church in general, and if the church at Jerusalem was not considered in it as having any authoritative superintendence as an individual society over the church at Antioch, the objection of Mr. Haldane is completely irrelevant. To tell us, moreover, that "this argument "has not escaped the Church of Rome, and that Eckius, "the famous adversary of Luther, used the very same "weapons against that reformer which Presbyterians "employ against congregational government," is to tell us nothing to the point. It amounts merely to this, that arguments which have been urged from this passage for Presbytery, have been urged also, though upon a

different ground than is ſtated in theſe Letters, for the Roman Catholic ſyſtem. But it will never follow, from their being advanced, however inconcluſively, for the latter, that they may not be concluſive for the former. Many of the rational arguments, for inſtance, in favour of Independency, adduced by our author, agree *in ſubſtance* with the arguments adduced by the well known Thomas Paine, and other levelling demagogues, for the rights of the people in political democracy. But would Mr. Haldane allow that they were not concluſive for Independency, becauſe they had been urged by Paine for political democracy? Many arguments, too, which have been brought forward with propriety and ſucceſs for a wiſe, ſuperintending, particular Providence, have been employed to eſtabliſh that all things were ſubject to a blind fatality. But would any man allow, that becauſe they had not eſcaped the advocates for the latter, they were not concluſive for the former? And many arguments which have been employed by the apoſtle Paul, and other believers in the doctrine of juſtification without the works of the law, have been uſed by Antinomians for the purpoſes of licentiouſneſs, to ſhew that men may live as they pleaſe. But would Mr. Haldane admit, that becauſe the very ſame arguments had been adduced by Antinomians in ſupport of their ſcheme which had been uſed by Paul in demonſtration of the doctrine of juſtification by grace, they were not valid for the latter? If he would refuſe however to grant this concluſion in theſe other caſes, ought he not equally to reject it in the one before us, and allow, that even though the argument which has been deduced by Preſbyterians and Roman Catholics from this paſſage, for their reſpective ſyſtems, had been the ſame (and the contrary has been proved), it might be inconcluſive for the latter, while concluſive for the former?

In enumerating the diſtinguiſhing excellencies of Independency, Mr. Haldane mentions, as peculiar to it, circumſtances which are common to it with Preſbyterian government. He ſays, for example, p. 396. "that an "Independent church may exiſt equally under any form "of civil government." But cannot Preſbyterian churches exiſt equally under all forms of civil government? If the favourite principle of Mr. Haldane be adopted, that the civil government in any country, *of whatever form*, is not to interfere with the church, may not the church exiſt with equal eaſe under any government, whether it be Independent or Preſbyterian? And even granting that it is to interfere like the Britiſh Government, to ſecure a comfortable maintenance to the clergy, as long as they do their duty, might not this be done under any form of political adminiſtration to Preſbyterian churches, whether democratic, ariſtocratic, monarchical, or mixed? It cannot therefore be allowed to be one of the diſtinguiſhing excellencies of Independency, that it can exiſt equally under any form of civil government, ſince that is no more peculiar to it than to Preſbytery, Epiſcopacy, or any other form of eccleſiaſtical adminiſtration.

"It in no ſhape," ſays he, "interferes with any form "of civil government, nor can, ſo far as it acts upon "proper principles, be juſtly regarded as an object of "jealouſy to the ſtate." And then he adds in a Note, that "churches independent of each other, and acknow-"ledging no head upon earth, are certainly far leſs for-"midable to civil government, than a great body com-"prehending thouſands, it may be, in all different parts "of the country, ſubject to an individual or to a repre-"ſentative body. The former, were they hoſtile to "government, muſt alter their conſtitution before they "could attempt any thing againſt the ſtate." But does not Preſbytery alſo no leſs refrain from interfering with

civil government, and, so far as it acts upon proper principles, is it not plain that it can no more justly be regarded as an object of jealousy to the state? Besides, when we consider the uniform *secrecy* which distinguishes all the meetings of Independents for matters of government, and the openness and publicity of the meetings of Presbyterians, and that the power which is given by Independency to the people in the church is similar to what is granted to them by democracy in the state, and how ready they may be to transfer this spirit from the one to the other, is it not obvious that if any form of ecclesiastical government be formidable to the state, it must be that of Independency, and that Presbytery, from its beneficial consequences in this respect, must be entitled to the preference?

"It is evident," says Mr Haldane, "that no other "kind of churches than what are called *Independent*, can "possibly be formed in *many* situations. Such an one "is practicable in *all* circumstances where there are any "believers. This affords no slight argument in favour "of this mode of church-order." It affords however no stronger argument for this mode of *church-order*, than it would present for breaking down the political world into as many independent civil governments as there were towns or villages upon the face of the earth. And, in support of this, it might be contended with equal plausibility, "that it is evident that no other kind of political "governments but those of towns or villages can possibly "be formed in *many* situations. But such an one is "practicable in *all* circumstances where there are any "inhabitants." Nay, it might even be proved upon this mode of arguing, that as in *many* situations, no more than *a family* can be found in a place, the primitive mode of political government by families is better than any other, and that there should be no superior administration, but

as many distinct political governments as there are families in the world. But if this reasoning would be considered as completely inconclusive when applied to civil, must it not be equally inconclusive when applied by Mr. Haldane to ecclesiastical government? May not every thing, moreover, in a church of Christ, in *every* situation, be administered by the office-bearers, in opposition to the Independent plan, without soliciting the judgment of the members; and as soon as a sufficient number of churches is formed near them, or, even though at a distance, in connection with them, may not a court of review be established amongst them? Have not single congregations of Seceders in America, for example, been subject to the review of a Presbytery or Synod in Britain, and enjoyed, in addition to that congregational government which they had in themselves, the superadded advantage of their superintendence—a benefit which cannot be claimed by Independents?

"It may be alleged," says Mr. Haldane, p. 168. "that if a church has not some body of men to controul "it, they will be apt to act improperly and partially. "All men are liable to err, and every church needs the "constant care of the great Shepherd. But this care "he ever exercises. He has promised to be in the midst "of them when met in his name. If we view a church "merely like other societies, they may be considered to "be equally prone to err, and we may imagine it might "be an advantage to have unprejudiced persons to appeal "to; but as God promised to Israel of old a special "superintendence, so has Jesus to his churches. It was "never intended that they should go on without it, and "this is calculated to keep up a spirit of dependence on "himself, without which no church can prosper." But has not Jesus promised to Christians *individually*, as well as to churches, a special superintendence? Do not they

err notwithſtanding this? and do not Independents themſelves grant to their congregations a power of controul, to correct theſe errors? But if Independents themſelves find it neceſſary to veſt a power of controul over particular Chriſtians in each of their congregations, notwithſtanding the ſuperintendence which Jeſus has promiſed to theſe Chriſtians individually, may not a ſimilar power of controul be requiſite over theſe congregations if they err, notwithſtanding the ſuperintendence which Jeſus has promiſed to exerciſe over them? And if it is not inconſiſtent with that ſpirit of dependence on the bleſſed Jeſus which individual Chriſtians are called to manifeſt, that they ſhould be ſubject to the authoritative review of a congregation, how can it be incompatible with the exerciſe of a ſimilar dependence upon him by a congregation, that they ſhould be ſubject to the review of a higher court?

If ordination, in ſhort, conſiſts, as Mr. Haldane contends, only in an appointment of a miniſter to a particular congregation, and if, as ſoon as he ceaſes to be the paſtor of that congregation, he ceaſes to be a miniſter, on what principle can he be juſtified in exerciſing his office beyond that congregation? Why is he admitted, among Independents themſelves, to join in ordaining the miniſter of a ſeparate and diſtinct congregation? or why is he allowed to diſpenſe the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper in a congregation where he is not paſtor? Will not every reaſon which can be urged for his being a miniſter to a particular church only, and for his ceaſing to be a miniſter as ſoon as he ceaſes to be the paſtor of that ſociety, prove alſo, that it muſt be unlawful for him to exerciſe his function beyond that individual church? In fine, "if confeſſions of faith, of human compoſition," as Mr. Haldane maintains, p. 413. "though they pro-
"mote an appearance of unity, do not produce the

" reality—and if they tend to diſcourage the people " from ſearching the ſcriptures, by inducing a belief " that they are too difficult for the unlearned, and that " their ſummaries contain whatever is valuable in " them," why has Mr. Innes publiſhed lately one of *theſe ſummaries* for the benefit of young people, to prepare them for admiſſion to the ſacrament of the ſupper? Does Mr. Haldane here intend alſo to reprobate the ſummary which has been publiſhed by his brother? or rather, will he acknowledge as a brother, a man who has lately written a book, the tendency of which, in his opinion, is to diſcourage the people from reading the ſcriptures?

THE END.

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